

1-1-2007

Fieldwork/fieldwalking: Art, sauntering and science in the "walking country"

Perdita Phillips
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FIELDWORK/FIELDWALKING

art, sauntering and science in *the walkingcountry*

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of
Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Arts
Edith Cowan University**

by

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15 May 2007

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

fieldwork/fieldwalking is a contemporary art project exploring practices of walking and science in the field. It explores the themes of walking and fieldwork in art, and as art. Whilst the sociology of science in the laboratory has been well theorised, less has been said about the field in the natural sciences. And, equally, the most recent and provocative walking art is found in urban areas, in a fabric dominated by the patterns of human settlement. How could new walking art be made in non-urban places? The project set out to investigate how these two, fieldwork and walking, could be combined in artwork. The research question was: **in the common ground shared between art and science, what are the connections between fieldwork and walking in the field?** The project explored this and five sub-questions through photography, video, and the creation of installations and sound art walks. Much of the research revolved around one field location, *the walkingcountry* in the Kimberley of Western Australia that was visited six times over different seasons from 2004 to 2006. Activities included walking and general immersion in the place, scientific and artistic 'fieldwork' and the observation and documentation of the work of scientists at the site and in the Kimberley.

Non-urban areas can offer intense and specific experiences with heightened materiality and direct engagement with nonhuman agents. This was borne out in the fieldwork undertaken in the project. However the artworks created are also set in contrast to the work of other walking artists such as Hamish Fulton and Richard Long that are often based on sublime wilderness experiences. Based on my experiences I formulated and applied the concept of 'ordinary wilderness': much of one's time in the field is involved in pragmatic and bodily encounters. Some of the aesthetic experiences are local and ephemeral. *Wildness* and the delight of *wonder* are more appropriate than the fear and awe of the sublime. **fieldwork/fieldwalking** draws together threads from sources as diverse as recent scientific ecology, Ric Spencer's (2004) conversational aesthetics and non-representational theory in human geography to make art that questioned representational strategies and explored an expanded model of artworks where the relationships between the artist, the audience, the environment and the material art object are of equal importance.

A significant issue was how to creatively transform the experience of elsewhere (the field) into artworks in a gallery. In the sound art walk **To Meander and back (strange strolls**, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery (MBCAG), 2005) the strategy was to fold and imbricate *the walkingcountry*, the gallery in Fremantle, and the space in-between together. This artwork also sought to reconcile the 'emptiness' of Euro-Australian belonging by encouraging via sound and silence an understanding of place that is more living, changing and performative.

Other artworks included **Zoo for the Species** at the **National Review of Life Art** (Midland, 2003) and works in the solo exhibitions **Four Tales from Natural History** (Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 2004), **Semi** (Spectrum Project Space/Kurb Gallery, 2004) and **fieldwork/fieldwalking** (MBCAG, 2006).

Keywords: science and art, walking, fieldwork, place, belonging, nonhuman, feral, wildness, wonder, sound art, conversational aesthetics, non-representational theory, processes of silence, *the walkingcountry*, Kimberley, Australia, site-specificity, *FutureNatural*.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the kindness of forty-two members of the Western Australian Naturalists Club who generously allowed me to photograph their boots.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Dale Roberts, School of Animal Biology, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Western Australia for the use of a night vision scope.

The participation of geologist Alvin D’Almeida was a key part of the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project. I am extremely grateful for Alvin’s charm and generosity, passion, patience and good humour as I sound recorded, photographed and videoed the geological mapping of *the walkingcountry*.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Thalie Partridge PhD student at the Fire, Earth and Water Research Group, Department of Biological Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney and Mike Freeman Senior Land-Use Planning Geologist, Geological Survey of Western Australia, Department of Industry and Resources, Western Australia. Both participated in interviews about their work. A small survey of field scientists distributed by email also attracted twenty nine anonymous respondents.

As well as the contributing artists and all those who took ‘strange strolls’ specific mention needs to be made of Nyanda Smith, Minaxi May and Ric Spencer who helped especially with the **strange strolls** sound art walking project.

The Exegesis was substantially improved by the thoughts and editorial suggestions of Professor Andrew Taylor, my supervisor Dr Nien Schwarz and Nyanda Smith.

A general thank you goes out to all the University staff who assisted, and to the many technicians, curators and gallery staff, colleagues, family and friends who helped in innumerable ways along the journey.

This project would not have been possible without the generous permission and assistance of the Garstone family on whose land part of *the walkingcountry* is found.



Figures i and ii. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* (Oliver Sacks, 1986) and *Labyrinths* (Borges, 1970) stranded in July 2004.

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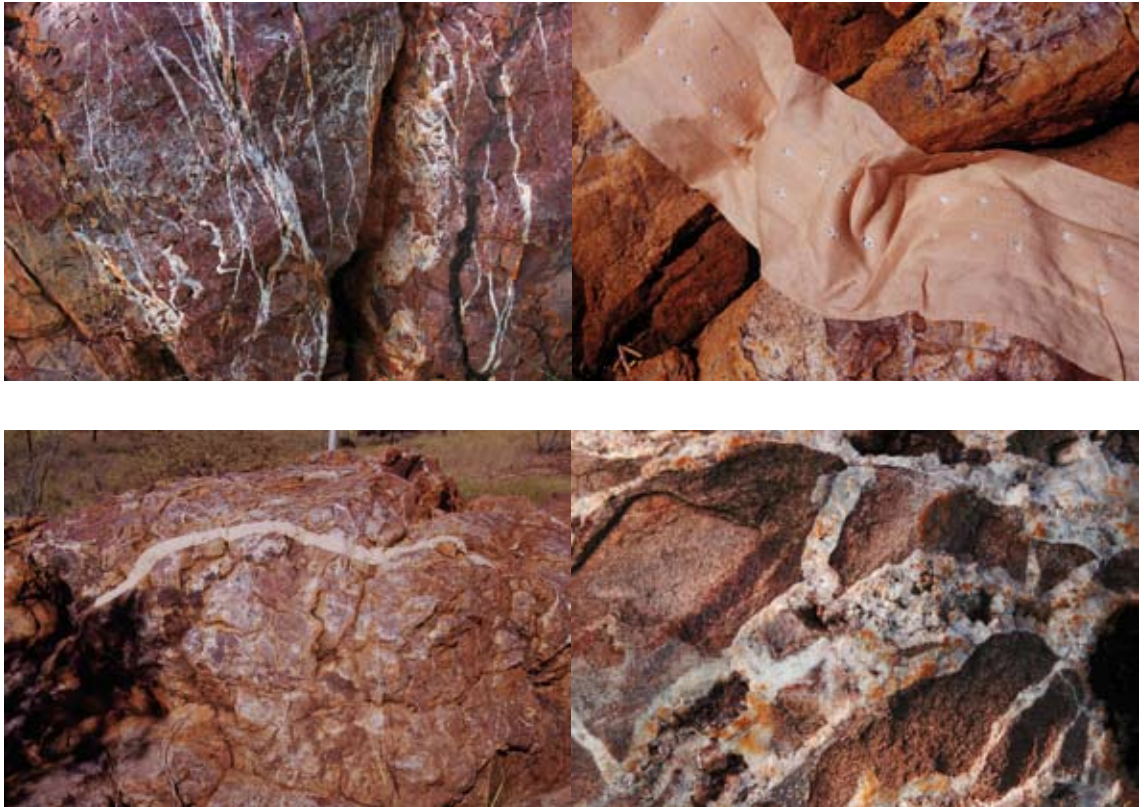


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1.0 The Thesis

1.1 To open

I am a Western Australian artist who makes artworks across the visual media in sculpture, installation, sound, photography and digital print works. I work with “the environmental” in its widest definition, from ecological concepts and issues, through its different systems of understanding, to the relationship that people have with “nature”¹. The themes of places and spaces, walking and mapping, and collection and curiosity recur in my work. It is very important that my work is based in experiences – in our spatial lives. I like to feel that I partake in the world of people and places with the hybrid vision of an artist, a scientist and a fellow traveller. I use walking as a bodily, perceptual and occasionally meditative experience in the midst of the everyday. I examine questions of scale, landscape and networks in my work. Part of my commitment to a “lightness of touch” can be seen in my use of minimally altered found objects and the faint *restless* humour that underlies my work.

In the past I drew on the word eclogue², to describe an artwork created as an ephemeral situation (see Figures 1.1 and 1.3). Once the event had passed these types of artworks exist only as a photographic record. The eclogue was used to highlight the importance of ecosystems and landscapes outside of the urban centre, to capture events that are the result of chance occurrences, and to examine the relationship between the human “observer”³ and the landscape. My Masters Thesis (1999), *Objects in the Field*,

¹ As we shall see I regard nature as a problematic term.

² A pastoral poem, usually in the form of a dialogue between shepherds e.g. Virgil’s *Eclogues*.

³ A recurring motif in the project is the tension between a scientific understanding of the observer and more phenomenological or poetic understandings of what constitutes an observer.



Figure 1.1 ○ (Moon Mirrors), Smoke Creek, 1996. Eclogue (photographic documentation of site specific installation).

examined the role of photography in this process and the relevance of Robert Smithson's Non-Site in my art⁴ (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Robert Smithson, Non-Site "Line of Wreckage", Bayonne, New Jersey, 1968, (Sobieszek, 1993, p. 14). Aluminium, broken concrete, photographs and photostat map.

Figure 1.3 ○ (Moon Mirrors), Smoke Creek, 1996. Eclogue (photographic documentation of site specific installation).



⁴ At some stage I became dissatisfied with the *flatness* of the eclogues: not strictly with the limitations of photographs as records of the *conceptual* artworks, but also with a sense of the exhaustion of the language of installation and the lack of a *living* experience offered by the artworks. Ultimately there is no practical way that more than a handful of people can experience first hand the works that I do in isolated areas. How else can places far away be experienced as sites for a majority of art viewers?

1.2 The concern

fieldwork/field walking was a project that set out to explore the area of walking and fieldwork in art, and as art. Fieldwork is conceived here as the activity of scientists in the environment, primarily in the natural sciences. Whilst the sociology of science in the laboratory has been well theorised (e.g., Latour & Woolgar, 1979), less has been said about the field in science. This is in contrast to the discipline of ethnography (and to a lesser extent geography) that has examined the historical and contemporary role of fieldwork and the observer over the last 20 years. **fieldwork/field walking** set out to infuse this gap in the field with artworks.

Field walking is also the name given to a technique in archaeology. It is the systematic searching the landscape surface for archaeological finds. More generally, the field is one of the few areas in science where walking and individual observation are still primary technologies. In the visual arts, walking in non-urban areas has been an important part of expanding the definition of the art object and redefining the genre of landscape art in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

But walking is also a prosaic activity of the everyday, and thus a key connection between the field and the city. Moreover, in car-oriented cities such as Perth, it takes on an aspect of social alterity. Walking is pivotal to the project because, on the one hand, it is personal, physical, everyday and immediate; and, on the other hand, it is technologically simple, autonomous and at an increasing distance from the



Figures 1.4 to 1.7. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Kimberley Sandstone Range Blanket stranded from July 2005 to February 2006 (see Figures 2.4 to 2.7).

contemporary trajectory of high modernism. These characteristics see it being increasingly left out of the “future modern”. These tensions provide impetus to re-examine walking as an art practice.

More generally contemporary art in Australia has shied away from engagements with non-urban places. Most likely this is because of the weight of emphasis placed upon landscape in Australian art history and possibly because of an exhaustion of techniques and possibilities that seem relevant to the contemporary. Without necessarily denigrating some exciting work that has taken place in non-urban areas I would point to the enormous opportunities for exploring recent theories about walking and the field in the social sciences. Working with these recent developments would address what could be seen as an insufficient critical engagement with the nonhuman by contemporary Australian artists and critics in the last twenty years.

So for the reasons outlined above there is a terrain that can be engaged with: asking questions about – how science in the field is practised and understood – what walking might be in contemporary life – how one walks in the field – and about what these might mean in the context of contemporary art. The approach chosen to address this *topography* was via a practice based art project. As such the project had an empirical mode of operation. The initial parameters were set and the terrain was sketched out. The connections between the concepts were then woven and unravelled in an iterative process. In other words the way to answer the questions posed was to make art. The primary mode of research has been the production of visual and sound artworks.



Figures 1.8 and 1.9. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Corner Photopoint February 2006.

1.3 The research question

As a creative project *fieldwork/field walking* did not set out to solve a specific problem in the sense of a testable hypothesis, rather it is aimed at exploring the territory between art and science and the current evolution of the definitions of nature. My aim was to achieve a significant body of work that contributes to new ways of seeing landscapes. The objective of *fieldwork/field walking* was therefore to make art that explores the area between the ephemeral or transient experience and the site-specific and/or in-depth

experience and to contribute to ongoing debates into human relationships with nature and the understanding of our *spatial lives*. The project also touched upon the practical issue of how to creatively transform the experience of elsewhere (the field) into artworks. Figure 1.11 shows the space of **fieldwork/fieldwalking** diagrammatically.

The research question formulated was therefore: **in the common ground shared between art and science, what are the connections between fieldwork and walking in the field?** During the process of research a number of subsidiary lines of inquiry were developed and are listed below. Unfamiliar terms are explained later in Section 1.8.

What will be found by adopting an “ordinary wilderness” approach to fieldwork and field walking? In what ways is it possible:

- to re-imagine non-urban places that are local, emplaced, and embodied? Within the canon of Australian contemporary art, can a non-urban place be talked about in a way that is not nostalgic?
- to have a *conversation* with the nonhuman?
- to have such a conversation with a field scientist? If it is framed in terms of some sort of exchange then my aim is to add something to the scientific community as well as to be influenced by it.
- to successfully transform the experience of “elsewhere” to somewhere (i.e. from the field to the gallery). Where in the continuum of representation, translation and transformation does the work of the thesis sit?
- to reconcile the “emptiness” of Euro-Australian belonging and its relationship with an Aboriginal past, present and future?

1.4 Background and setting

This section introduces three key themes that form the setting for the project: the *FutureNatural*, the scientific field and walking as art.

1.4.1 The *FutureNatural*⁵

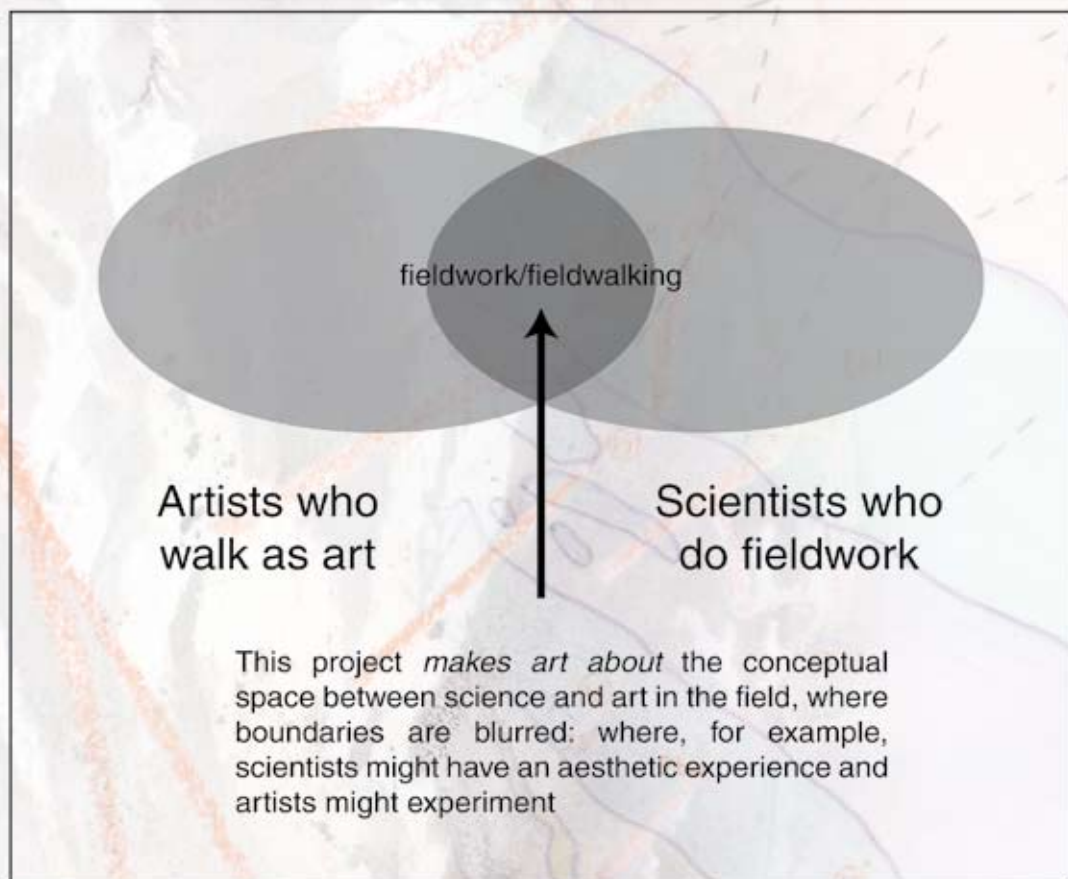
A key theme of interest is the meeting of two important understandings of nature that have evolved in recent times. The first, a deconstructive position, holds that “nature” (with a small n) is a cultural construct, which is unstable and subject to change as power is played out upon it. The environmental movement also critiques the “technological Prometheanism of the enlightenment project” (Sober, 1996, p. 22) and identifies connections between anthropocentrism and forms of racial and gender discrimination. But such environmentalists nevertheless consider that “Nature” (with a capital N) is something real that has value and that can be investigated for claims of truth: real, authentic Nature is more desirable than fake nature. The orthodox scientific position is that Nature has physical real-



Figure 1.10 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

⁵ I borrow this term in part from Robertson et al. (1996).

Figure 1.11 The space of the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project.



Fieldwork: art activities undertaken outside of the studio

Fieldwalking: art using walking as a medium outside of urban areas

Fieldwork: work conducted at least partially out of doors, in uncontrolled settings

Fieldwalking: walking as part of fieldwork. A particular archaeological method of sampling artefacts lying on the surfaces of exposed and disturbed soils



Figures 1.12 and 1.13. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

ity: the environmentalist says that Nature, in its physical reality, has intrinsic worth. There is a conflict here with any deconstructivist position. How this plays out in the future will influence the fundamental shape of society. This debate is what I term the *FutureNatural*. Artists and thinkers have created a stimulating variety of responses to this conflict between Nature and nature. ***fieldwork/field walking*** aims to add to this discussion. The project began with the aim of creatively enquiring into the broader questions of: what is the *FutureNatural*?; how will “truth” and “imagination” stand together in the future?; and how can the “subjective” and the “objective” be resolved or redefined through art?



Figures 1.14 and 1.15. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Sandy Creek on left February 2006.

1.4.2 The scientific field

Appendix A.1 discusses in detail the space of the scientific field. It describes the differences between the field and the spaces of the laboratory and the office. Especially in the natural sciences the field is commonly taken to mean non-urban areas. Although I have discussed how this might *not* be the case in Appendix A.1 I will nevertheless be concentrating in this Thesis on non-urban areas. I argue that the field is a space that is coded, regulated, and defined as objective by science. It comes into existence as a *site* when the performance of fieldwork takes place. The space of the field has evolved over time. The ***fieldwork/field walking*** project is concerned with stretching the boundaries of the field and of the work that takes place in it.



Figure 1.16 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

1.4.3 Walking as art

...walking will be seen to be constitutive of place itself, and places in turn will be understood to enable certain kinds of movement through or within them (Lee, 2004, p. 2).

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project considers artists where their own walking constitutes the artwork, practices where moving through space on foot is a major source of inspiration and material for their work, and artists who create situations for the viewer/participant to move on foot. The initial attraction to walking art in my practice was because it potentially encompassed so many different aspects⁶. I will discuss here the relationship between walking and the field. Fieldwork is a process that requires the engagement of the body. “A central premise of fieldwork has been that understanding is founded in personal experience” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 13). Whilst Kuklick and Kohler (as science historians) definitely do not use a phenomenological approach, there are important implications for how the field is understood, that come out of such a philosophical position.



Figure 1.17 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Where the 2.5 metre freshwater crocodile used to sunbathe.

For me, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is important to walking because of the way that the body is explained⁷. Following Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty extended the importance of the connection between the body and the space around it. Not only is the body *in the world* but also the person and the environment become a seamless web – an *intertwining*. This has important consequences for the everyday physicality of walking. In the same way that we prepare for sleep by *inviting* it rather than explicitly willing it, we walk without thinking our steps. For Merleau-Ponty, a prior pre-cognitive grasp of the unity of this

bodily experience allows us to *grasp* the unity between me and objects: I see a geological

6 Walking as art, as writing, as pilgrimage, as protest...
Walking as spiritual, as mundane...
Walking as constituting boundaries, as transgressing boundaries...
Walking as deeply personal, as emphatically public...
Walking as touring, as witnessing...
Walking as practical, as impractical...
Walking as compliance, as defiance...
Walking as seeing, as being seen...
Walking as traditional, as revolutionary...
Walking as wild, as mediated, as constructed...
Walking as an interpretive act, a generative act, an embodied act...
Walking as differentiating space, as consolidating space
Walking in space and time, connecting space, connecting time...
("Walking as knowing as making: Walking exchange", 2005).

7 His particular concept of the body underlies the whole of his thinking: "we are incarnate through and through" (Moran, 2000, p. 427). Our senses do not work separately: they overlap forming a melange of sensings. The world is encountered through the unified "field" of senses that is structured by the underlying fabric of the body. The body is an *entity in action* that reveals the world. The "world calls us to witness it into being" (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, & Wylie, 2002, p. 438). The more complex the connection between the body and the world, the more mutual and related is the connection between the self and the world.



Figures 1.18 and 1.19. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Riggers gloves* stranded July 2005, retrieved February 2006.

pick as graspable, an apple as edible and a rock slope as climbable. This means in the busy city street we cope with complexity through this sense of unity. But can we perceive this unity whilst walking and make art from this intuitive state? Is this the “rhythm of the walk” that walking artist Hamish Fulton (2002) talks about?

According to Merleau-Ponty, one does not seek to understand the world but the *self in the world*. Orthodox science sees the view from the top of the hill with a detached eye, but neglects the walk to the top of the hill and the landscape of objects and events that surrounds you when you are in motion. In phenomenology all these things and events are perceived in a melange which itself cannot be fully articulated. This is the *lived body*: we need to get used to ambiguity and complexity. The body gives us specificity — of gender and sexual outlook that colours our relations with everything in the world — but it is also contingent and dependent upon externality and change.

One well known example that Merleau-Ponty gives is the very different experience of when your two hands touch, from when you touch something that is not your body. When your left hand touches your right hand, you are simultaneously touching and being touched. We oscillate between one and the other. This relationship is special and the metaphor can be extended to the body in the world. He likens it to a flesh-to-flesh contact. Flesh is a surface with an inside and a skin so it is perceiver and perceived. The world itself is a kind of flesh and when we meet it with our bodies it is flesh on flesh: “our own body ...is in the world as the heart is in the organism; it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 203). If we are perceiver *and* perceived then we are flesh in the flesh of the world. Merleau-Ponty saw culture and nature as “two worlds... united together in the experience of the sensory, in perception, in the ambiguous world of the flesh” (Moran, 2000, p. 424).



Figure 1.20 interdigitated hands.

We are not simply objects (or subjects!) in a spatial world. The body is spatial, and through moving and inhabiting space we can articulate it. Commenting on a certain type of environmental art Rebecca Solnit (2001, p. 58) notes,

for these works geography is everything: “you had to be there.” In a cosmology that no longer postulates nature as something out there, as apart, landscape – space – is joined by animals and the human body as manifestations of the natural. Indeed the emphasis on the body is an emphasis on the subject as object, the cultural as natural, the maker as within the territory of the work.



Figures 1.21 to 1.23. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Riggers gloves* stranded July 2004 (top right) and July 2005, retrieved February 2006.

Our body extends out from its physical surface. We not only dream at night, but dream in real time about objects around us and project what might happen to them. We have virtual bodies because we explore events before doing them. We pick up the scissors knowing *what* they will do as a quality already present in them.

It is not surprising that over the last fifty years a phenomenological approach has been a key strategy for artists using the body and a considerable theory has developed in response to this⁸. For me, embodiment is the living of the body through the spatial and the sensual. I have discovered that as a sculptor it is as important to understand how I relate to my body as much as how I relate to things. The pace of walking is indispensable to making this experience specific.

⁸ For example phenomenology's influence on Minimalism is recounted by Potts (2000). More recently, new media theorist Mark Hansen (2004) claims that the rise of new media reflects not a technological transcendence but rather a recoporealization of vision via an embodied “user”.

In sum, the act of walking is the practice and bodily performance of space, and the negotiation of social space. And if we are enfleshed in the world, then places are enfleshed through us. Anthropologist Tim Ingold encapsulates it thus:

...The forms of the landscape – like the identities and capacities of its human inhabitants – are not imposed upon a material substrate but rather emerge as condensations or crystallisations or activity within a relational field. As people, in the course of their everyday lives, make their way by foot around familiar terrain, so its paths, textures and contours, variable through the seasons, are incorporated into their own embodied capacities of movement, awareness and response – or into what Gaston Bachelard (1994, p. 11) calls their “muscular consciousness”. But conversely, these pedestrian movements thread a tangled network of personalized trails through the landscape itself. Through walking, in short, landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending (Ingold, 2004, p. 333)

1.4.4 History of Walking Art

The Exegesis does not set out a history of walking in art. I have opted to discuss a number of walking artists and their works that have risen to significance at key milestones in the journey of the project. Alongside these discussions in the sections of the Exegesis I have included images of the walking artworks that have been influential in the project⁹.

1.5 Research procedure

It was initially decided that the best way to answer the research question was to establish a field site that would be visited a number of times over the course of the project. The aim was to make art from examining in depth a remote ecosystem over a number of seasons. Repeated visits were necessary to enable me to obtain data over the seasons to take into account the changing nature of a place. The process of becoming familiar with a site was an important aspect of the study. The idea was that the site would be interacted with in a number of ways including drawing, photography, video and audio recording as well as in ways that would mimic or reflect scientific fieldwork.

⁹ In the process of my research I have found the following texts on the history of walking art useful:

- *Walkscapes: Walking as an aesthetic practice* (Careri, 2002);
- *Wanderlust: A history of walking* (particularly chapter 16) (Solnit, 2000);
- *Guy Debord and the Situationists International: Text and documents* (McDonough, 2002); and
- *Theory of the Derive and other situationist writings on the city* (Costa, Andreotti, & Internationale situationniste, 1996).

In addition to shows on individual artists some significant group exhibitions that I researched that incorporating walking art included:

- *The power of the city: The city of power* an exhibition curated by Christel Hollevoet and Karen Jones (Hollevoet & Jones, 1992);
- *Walking and thinking and walking* curated by Bruce Ferguson: a subsection of *nowhere* (Ferguson, Fuchs, Gramby, Blazwick, & Bauer, 1996);
- *En Route* Serpentine Gallery (Steiner, 2002);
- *Walk Ways* curated by Stuart Horodner (Horodner, 2002); and
- *strange strolls* curated by Perdita Phillips (P. Phillips, 2005b).

A location in the Kimberley was considered desirable because it would allow me to examine notions of wildness and wilderness at the same time that I could take advantage of my previous experience in the area. The initial research location was reconnoitred in July 2003 but proved impractical because of access problems during the Wet. A second research location was secured in February 2004 and six visits were made to the site. The dates of these visits are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Field visits to *the walkingcountry*¹⁰

Number	Date	Kija Season
1	17 April to 14 May 2004	Marlingin
2	7 July to 31 July 2004	Warnkan
3	30 November to 22 December 2004	Werrkalen
4	25 February to 21 March 2005	Kurlun
5	20 June to 30 July 2005	Warnkan/Parnten (visit to Purnululu National Park)
6	20 February to 10 March 2006	Kurlun

At first this location did not have a name as I was unsettled by its *slippery* disposition. But after a serendipitous discussion with Dr Veronica Brady in April 2005 at the *Be True to the Earth* conference, the location became simply¹¹ *the walkingcountry*.

Much of the field visits were spent walking the country. Sometimes these walks were in order to get to specific places (e.g., the end of the valley); other walks were semi-intentional or unplanned (see Section 3.2.5.2 on the saunter). On each visit thirteen photopoints were photographed. Ambient sound was also recorded at each of these photopoints. The Merton photopoint was also recorded on time-lapse video from sunrise (civil twilight) to sunset on most visits. In July 2004 two extra photopoints were established in accordance with Department of Agriculture guidelines (McLaughlin, 1993; Tauss, 1992) and photographed. Insects, mammals and reptiles were observed and a list of birds was kept. Specimens of plants and rocks were collected as were animal remains such as bones and wasp nests. Other recording strategies included recording GPS locations and tracks; and once a day recording landforms, soils, geology, vegetation, sounds, smells and feelings at a random location.



Figures 1.24 and 1.25. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Merton photopoint (with steel dropper) on right March 2006.

¹⁰ *the walkingcountry* is situated on the border between the Kija and Miriwoong cultural groups.

¹¹ (modestly).

Night vision scope photography was undertaken in field visits 5 and 6. A number of small video projects were undertaken. For example, video recordings were made of a route in the form of the letters *dte* through the landscape of the Wheelbarrow Creek valley (in July 2005) and of the letters *pto* traced out in a small sandy clearing in a steep sided valley in the Saw Range in March 2006. An investigation was made into the bowers of the great bowerbird, *Chlamydera nuchalis*. Various domestic and souvenir objects were emplaced in *the walkingcountry* and retrieved at a later date. These things were dubbed “strandings” and are discussed in Sections 3.3.2, 3.3.9 and 3.5.1.1.

The second aspect of the project was to observe the process of scientific fieldwork. The idea was to work creatively with documentation to produce further artworks. Locating a scientist willing to be photographed proved a challenge. However Thalie Partridge (PhD ecology researcher at Purnululu National Park) was interviewed 1-3 August 2004 and our conversations formed part of ***Four Tales from Natural History*** (Phillips, 2004b). Between 6 and 11 July 2005 geologist Alvin D’Almida mapped *the walkingcountry* and in 2006 respondents were sought for a three question ***Field Survey: The experiences of field researchers***. Artworks derived from these investigations will be shown in the ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** exhibition (Phillips, 2006a).



Figures 1.26 to 1.29. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Lower images show the last departure from the Merton photopoint at the end of the Wet in March 2006.

During the course of **fieldwork/fieldwalking** the following artworks were exhibited:

- **Zoo for the species** (2003) 7 track audio installation in *National Review of Live Art*, 22-26 October, Midland
- **Ordinary Wilderness: Murmuring Polyphony** (2004c) digitally printed bound book in *Books04*, Noosa Regional Art Gallery, August 28 to October 17, Noosa
- **Four Tales from Natural History** (2004b) solo installation at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 26 August to 26 September, Northbridge
- **Semi** (2004d) solo exhibition at the Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 11 to 25 November 2004, Northbridge
- **The Before (A work in 3 parts)** (2004d) mixed media installation in *For nothing*, 26 November 2004 to 14 January 2005, The Bank Gallery, Midland
- **fieldwork/fieldwalking**, (2006a) solo exhibition 25 August to 3 September Moores Building, Fremantle. A catalogue was printed after the show and is available in Appendix A.2.

I also curated a 16 person international sound art walking exhibition, **strange strolls** (2005b), 18 November to 18 December 2005, which also included my soundwalk **To Meander and back** (2005c). The catalogue of this show is included as Appendix A.3.

Papers were presented at the following conferences:

- “Spirals, tracks and trackless wastes: Walking the city and walking the ordinary wilderness” (2004e) at *Palimpsests: Transforming communities*, 11 to 12 November, Curtin University, Perth
- “Ordinary wilderness” (2005a) at *Be true to the Earth*: Inaugural Conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (Australia-New Zealand) 31 March to 1 April 2005, Monash University, Melbourne
- “Strange strolls: translation and transformation in sound art walking projects” (2006b) *Senses of Place: Exploring concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses*, 6 to 8 April, School of Art, University of Tasmania, Hobart. An updated and expanded version of the paper is presented in Appendix A.2.

My paper, **Doing art and doing cultural geography: the fieldwork/field¹²walking project** (2004a), outlining the beginnings of the fieldwork/fieldwalking project, was published in *Australian Geographer* in July 2004 and is included as Appendix A.5. The short statement **Bad environmental art** was published as part of a “stirring” column in *Artlink* in 2005 (Anonymous Artist (who has made both good and bad environmental art), 2005). The statement is reprinted in Appendix A.6.



Figure 1.30 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Animal tracks.

12 There should be no space here between the words field and walking.

1.6 The Exegesis

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* thesis is comprised of a number of artistic works and a supporting written exegesis. As such the exegesis is of a lesser length than a conventional thesis. Milech and Schilo (2004) define three different types of models for creative PhD exegeses. These are:

- the Research Question Model which investigates a question in a conventionally academic way but as a lesser length [I interpreted this as a mini-thesis focused, for example, on one question in a research project];
- the Commentary Model which is an explanation of, or research report on the artworks; and
- the Context Model which explores the historical, social or disciplinary factors affecting the artwork

Milech and Schilo (2004, p. 10) argue that the Research Question Model is the best approach to enable a student to conceptualise “the affinity between the creative/production and written components of a research thesis in a strong and productive way.” My original intention (in 2003 – prior to Milech and Schilo) was to approach the Exegesis as a research question to be answered from within cultural theory. Towards the end of the project the trajectory of the Exegesis was shaped by the additional requirements of explaining the intentions behind individual works and of referring to the work of other artists (i.e. an amalgam of the Research Question and the Commentary Model, and even (in passing) the Context Model). It also extends from with Milech and Schilo’s Research Question Model by endeavouring to adopt an *applied* style of discussion that fits more closely with reflexive qualitative dissertation models in the humanities which enjoy wide currency (e.g. see Hay, 2000; Meloy, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

The style and structure of the Exegesis has also been influenced by a number of other factors. The starting point of the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project was *the walking-country* and my experience of it has influenced the Exegesis: it is *almost as if* the country itself made me write this way. Not only did I underestimate the influence of the *idea* of place in my work, but also the specific nature of the place *itself* has shaped the writing. The practice of walking has influenced the writing of this Exegesis. The consequence of this is that each of the sections should be read like a journey. They are divided into 6 essays or saunters¹³. Each section of the Exegesis has been written as if the contents were a series of points connected together¹⁴.

As a whole, the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project became far more concerned with the self than I originally intended – mostly, because I found it difficult to locate a scientist who would allow me to observe his or her fieldwork, I ended up doing fieldwork (or *pseudo*-fieldwork) based upon my original training and professional experience as an

¹³ “Of course walking, as any reader of Thoreau’s essay *Walking* knows, inevitably leads into other subjects. Walking is a subject that is always straying” (Solnit, 2000, p. 8).

¹⁴ American art historian James Elkins (2005) makes the distinction between research that informs the art practice and research that is part of the artwork itself. In respect to the *latter*, my Exegesis is clearly an amalgam of art practice and academic research because it is deliberately written in a conversational style as a guide to my work in the form of a series of saunters through *the walkingcountry*. But more importantly, in terms of the *former*, the significance of research outside of art history or criticism, namely in the areas of ecology, natural history, history of science and human geography to my practice is clearly evident.

environmental scientist. In turn, I had underestimated what that meant to look back at the change that I had made in my life when I finally decided that it was impossible for me to be successful as both an artist and a scientist. At that time (1993) I was disenchanted with the science that I was doing as part of my employment. This turning point had happened when I was working in the Kimberley only a few hundred kilometres away, and traces of those times erupted in *the walkingcountry*.

1.7 The final exhibition: fieldwork/fieldwalking

It should be noted that the Exegesis has been written before the completion of the final exhibition and as such there may be a few threads coming to the fore in these final works. Furthermore, the way that I work is not unique in that my practice takes on multiple forms and ideas are expressed in multiple ways in different works; many things influence each artwork. My endeavour in the Exegesis is to write in a way that approaches what cultural geographer Lesley Instone calls “situated entanglements” where there is a sense of “the overlapping and intertwining of culture, nature, humans, animals, and all manner of entities” (Instone, 2004, p. 134).



Figures 1.31 and 1.32. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

1.8 Scope and definitions

This section outlines the limits of the project of what is and is not included and some key definitions that are used in the Exegesis. It clarifies some understandings and allows some words to stand in for more complex and ongoing debates. Some are defined in the negative. This is mostly because a *positive* word does not exist. Whilst the world is complicated and interwoven at some point borders needed to be drawn and spheres of interest needed to be set to enable the project to be completed. An underlying assumption of the project is the value of art as a research method for expanding the boundaries of knowledge and understanding.

1.8.1 “Scales”

The spheres of walking and fieldwork cover a range of spatial scales and depths of understanding. Walking can be the process of knowing a location as a transient traveller – the tourist gaze -- the walker who passes and observes the random events in a single sweep of a landscape. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* also researched the *closeness* of walking and the intimacy of knowing a location that has been walked-over (and over), over a length of time. In the scientific process of fieldwork, the walker walks the landscape at the same scale as the casual or aesthetic person, but with very different results. The shifts between these scales were part of the research process.

1.8.2 Fieldwork and fieldwalking

The definition of scientific fieldwork as “enterprises conducted at least partially out of doors, in uncontrolled settings” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 1) utilised in Appendix A.1 can be complemented by the work that an artist does in the field. Both types of work are fieldwork. It is acknowledged that fieldwork is only one part of the scientific research process. But in this project it was the primary focus. Pre- and post- expeditionary practices were not touched upon other than incidentally. As mentioned previously, field walking is an archaeological sampling technique¹⁵. Walking conducted in non-urban areas is the complementary designation in art. Therefore the terms fieldwork and fieldwalking link scientific and artistic activity (see Figure 1.11).

Note: The “field” as understood in painterly composition or modern abstract painting (see Figure 1.33) is not an issue in the project¹⁶.

1.8.3 FutureNatural

As discussed in section 1.4.1 the *FutureNatural* (as a noun) is the nexus between the human and nonhuman world. It is also (in a performative sense) the question of what will become of this nexus in the future.

All of nature talks to me

if I could just figure out what it was trying to tell me

Laurie Anderson “Sharkey’s Day” from the album *Mister Heartbreak*

¹⁵ Fieldwalking “is an archaeological method of sampling artefacts laying on the surfaces of exposed and disturbed soils. It is a method used to detect new sites and past land-uses across a landscape. Practised by professional archaeologists, it is also a favourite method of amateur and voluntary archaeologists” (Brooker, 2006).

¹⁶ There is, however, an obvious debt to Rosalind Krauss’ *Sculpture in the expanded field* (1979).

Figure 1.33 A walk-through view of the Field exhibition of 1968 reproduced in Smith and Green (2002, Figure 03.02). Note feet.



Figures 1.34 to 1.37. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

1.8.4 The walkingcountry

The walkingcountry is located in the Kimberley of Western Australia. A detailed map of *the walkingcountry* can be seen in Figure 1.38. *The walkingcountry* is 1583 hectares of the Kimberley 68 km by road south of Kununurra at latitude 16° 2' 33.9" South and longitude 128° 23' 40.56" East. The extent of the walkingcountry covers Arthur Creek from below the Dunham Pilot Dam to just below the Diversion Dam and its associated catchment. It includes part of the Saw Range, the catchment of Wheelbarrow Creek draining into Arthur Creek from the south, some creeks on the north side of Arthur Creek as well as a small area of low rocky ground to the north of this again.

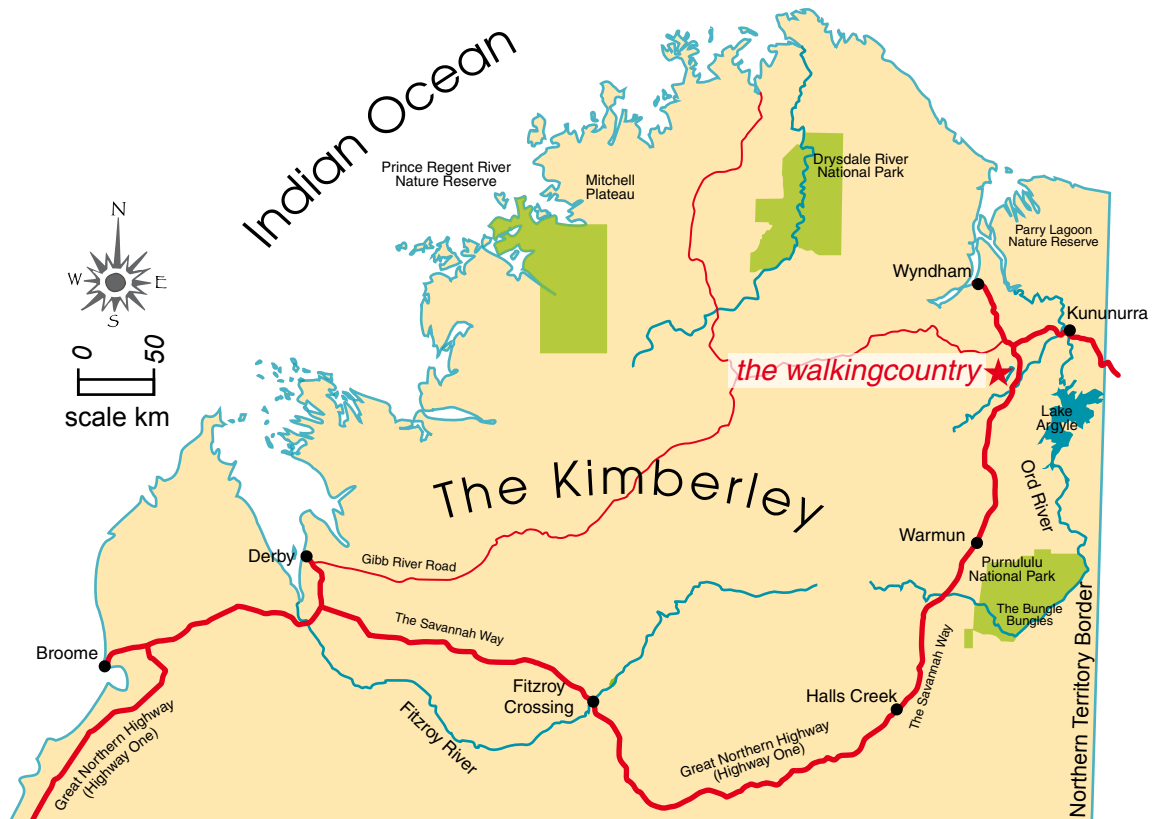


Figure 1.38 *The walkingcountry* is situated in the East Kimberley of Western Australia.

1.8.5 The non-urban

In order to limit the scope of the project a decision was initially made to restrict its extent to the question of walking and science in non-urban areas. In this case non-urban areas are those areas outside of towns and cities where the fabric of the landscape does not *belong to the city*. In Australia this includes farmland, extensively grazed pastoral land, Aboriginal held land, National Parks, nature reserves, “unalienated” crown land and many other miscellaneous land use types. The use of the term non-urban is contingent in the sense that the connections with urban areas are not denied, but the different-ness of experiences outside of the urban is affirmed.

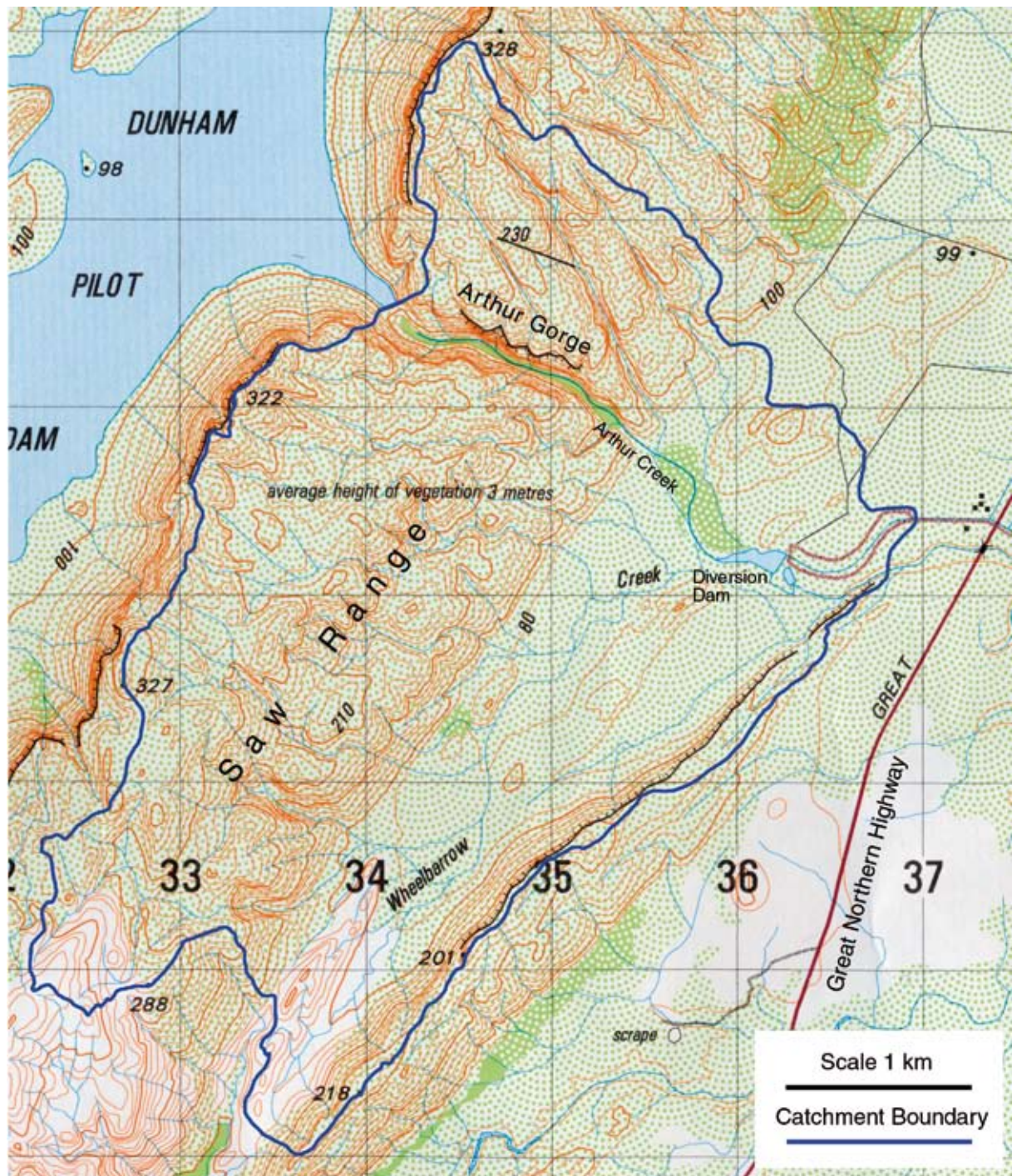


Figure 1.39 Detail of the walkingcountry showing the main features. Data extracted from Cabbage Tree Creek 1:50 000 topographic map © Copyright Commonwealth of Australia, Director of Survey, Department of Defence (1992) reproduced by permission.

1.8.6 Ordinary wilderness

Wilderness, wildness and ordinary wilderness are explored in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the Exegesis. In common usage the phrase ordinary wilderness is an oxymoron. Ordinary wilderness asks the questions: what happens if “wilderness experiences” are mundane? What happens if wild things have an autonomy outside of our control? What happens if wildness is as much inside us as it is where our rubbish ends up¹⁷? Stuart

¹⁷ “It is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves -- There is none such. It is the bog in our brain & bowels” (Thoreau’s Journal 30 August 1856, p. 84).

Cowan¹⁸ (1996) states that wild “alludes to a process of self-organisation that generates systems and organisms. All of which are within the constraints of – and constitute major components of – larger systems that are again wild.” So what happens if the ordinary is in the wild and the wild is in the ordinary?

1.8.7 The nonhuman and the more-than-human

In common parlance nonhuman¹⁹ refers to living things, mostly animals, which are not of the species of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The term has also been expanded by some to include cyborgs and machinic life (i.e. research by and around Donna Haraway, 1991). Recently the term more-than-human (e.g., Abram, 1996; Braun, 2005; Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen, & Whatmore, 2005; Instone, 2004; Lorimer, 2005) is gaining currency and goes further in shifting the balance between humans and others. However I have remained with the term nonhuman in the text because it is less cumbersome. For the purposes of the Exegesis it is taken to mean other animals and organic life and where appropriate is expanded to include other elements of the environment such as rocks, water, soil and weather.

1.8.8 Art-of-connection: The relationship between the artwork, artist, environment and audience

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project operated using a definition of the artwork that has evolved considerably from any linear cybernetic **artist** → **art object** → **audience** model shown in Figure 1.40. Here the artwork is more or less defined by the boundaries of the art object. Meaning is immanent in the art object and the mind of the singular viewer. Instead the project has revolved around multidirectional relationships (↔) between the **artist**, the **art object**, the **audience** and the **environment**. This is shown in Figure 1.41. The boundary of the artwork has expanded to encompass the process and experiences of both the audience and the artist. The interrelationship between elements becomes important and these relationships change and evolve.

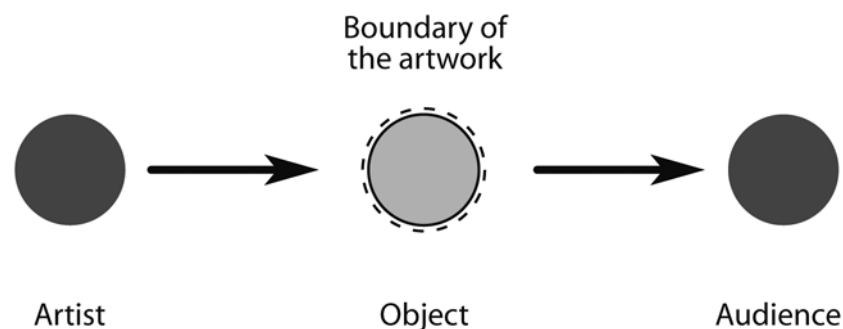


Figure 1.40 Sketch of the “commonsense” model of an artwork. The boundary of the artwork is snug around the object.

¹⁸ Cowan is an eco-sustainability practitioner whose original PhD was in complex linear systems.

¹⁹ Common dictionary definitions include: not human; not belonging to or produced by or appropriate to human beings.

A varied terrain springs from a deeper appreciation of the model. For example, it encouraged me to do sound works where the walking of the audience was central to the artwork. Mundane activities that took place at *the walkingcountry* were integrated into art. Although the focus of the project was always on the field, the field is not understood as existing unconnected from other things. The journey to and from *the walkingcountry* could not be ignored²⁰. In this model the environment is granted the status of having agency. Activities other than observing and collecting data take place in the field. And such a model of an artwork with its troubling boundaries naturally raises questions about the accessibility of an artwork for others. This is especially the case in the **field-work/fieldwalking** project when the environment in question is physically far from most audiences. How can artworks in this situation give interest and experience for audiences?

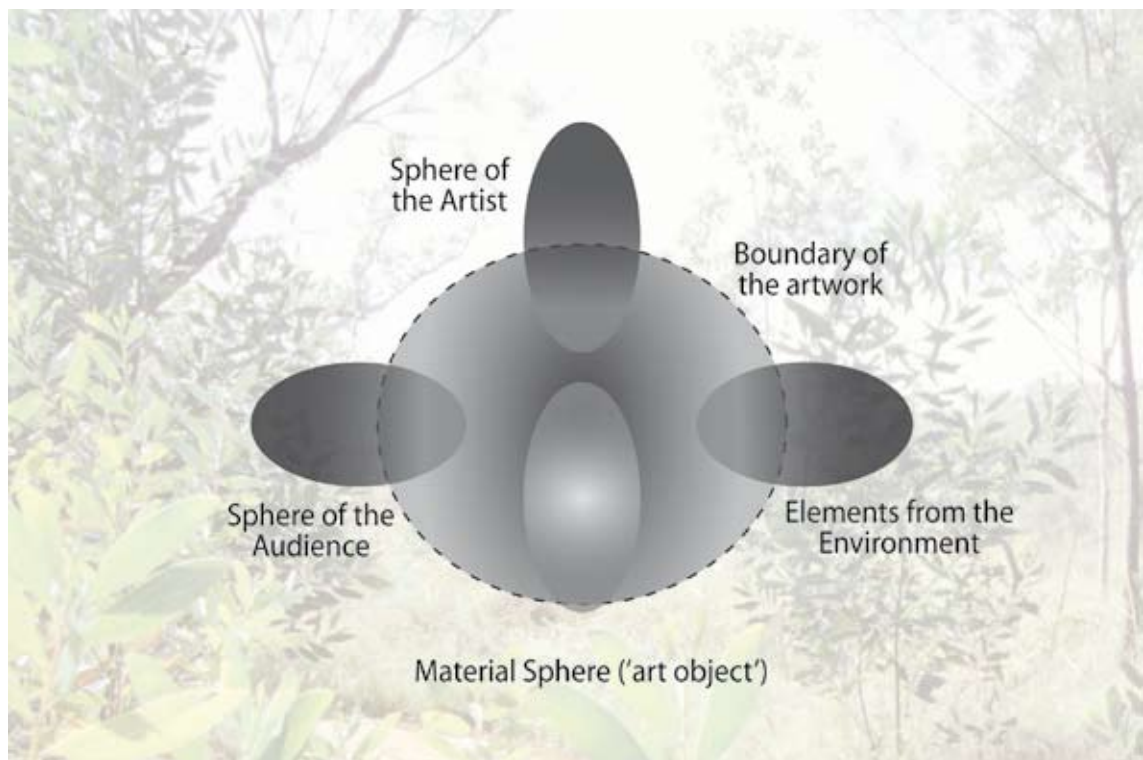


Figure 1.41 Sketch of the model of an artwork adopted in this project with all elements in dialogue with each other (background: Meander Photopoint).

Such a model of artist, art object, audience and environment shares similarities with practice that might broadly be considered to espouse a “relational” aesthetic. These practices have been variously called new genre public art (Lacy, 1995), littoral art (Littoral, 2006), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), conversational art (Bhabha, 1998), dialogue-based public art (Finkelpearl, 2001), connective art (see Gablik, 1991, 1995) and dialogic art (Kester, 2004). Communal conversations, for example, are commonly implied and some do appear to include the environment in their models. These types of art practices

²⁰ And this is already a finer qualification on the definition of the scientific field in Section 1.4.2.

encourage their participants to question fixed identities, stereotypical images, and so on, they do so through a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue, rather than a single, instantaneous shock of insight, precipitated by an image or object. These projects require a paradigm shift in our understanding of the world of art; a definition of aesthetic experience that is durational rather than immediate (Kester, 2004, p. 4).

At its best relational art facilitates dialogue amongst communities “It is re-framed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse” (Kester, 2004, p. 2). The definition of artist itself is changed to one that values being able to converse and listen. But relational art is not without its critics. One reason is the tendency for artist to become a “context provider”. Another is because the durational shift in the definition of the aesthetic experience (mentioned above) has not really occurred.

A third is because of the lack of materiality that may occur when the emphasis is on the dialogue between the artist and other humans. In other words, how does art-of-connection make matter, matter? What about the “thinginess” of things? This is conventionally understood as the materiality of the art object that may be a locus of the art, but may also take the form of the materiality of the experience of the artist and the audience. When I say material sphere this acknowledges the historical change in what might have been considered an art object²¹. In other words, in walking art a commonsense or conventional sculptural object does not exist, but at the same time the materiality of the process of walking is no less manifest. It may be more useful to consider the artwork as a restless place of meaning: “It’s not about attaching representational meaning to the object but rather allowing recognition, meaning, identity, to gather” (artist Roni Horn quoted by Neri, 2000, p. 35).

If the experience of the artist and the audience is the key to the process then a greater appreciation is needed of the balance between the direct experience of the artist and the shared experience of audiences: between indulgence on the part of the artist and providing a unchallenging and visually underwhelming tea party for the artworld (see Scanlan, 2005). “A work always comes together twice; first, for the artist, and, second, for the viewer. For me that second coming together is really an essential part of the experience” (Roni Horn in L. Cooke, 2000, p. 16). It may be we need to reconsider the nature of experience itself:

The command paradigm approaches experience as if we were somehow outside it, looking in, like disembodied subjects handling an object. But our experiences aren’t objects. They’re us; they’re what we’re made of. We are our situations; we are our moving through them. We are our participation – not some abstract entity that is somehow outside looking in at it at all (social theorist and writer Brian Massumi in Zournazi, 2003).

In the Exegesis I have used the term art-of-connection as a term for art that is cognisant of having multidirectional relationships between the artist, the art object, the audience and the environment.

²¹ For example, *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Lippard, 1997).

1.9 The route taken

The following subsections outline the route of each of the sections of the Exegesis. The first saunter is **Section 3.1. Waiting for cane toads** introduces three broad influences on the project: the Kimberley ecology, Kimberley experience and the issue of the immanent cane toad invasion of the Kimberley. The relevance of the idea of “feral” is discussed. The arguments of Section 3.1 are:

- that the non-art context surrounding the *fieldwalking/fieldwork* project has influenced the overall directions of the artworks;
- that the tensions of seeking and denying belonging are an important factor in Australian non-urban art; and
- that the way forward for environmental art lies in neither neglecting science nor relying wholly upon it for justification.



Figures 1.42 and 1.43. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Wet Season sunrise.

The second saunter is **Section 3.2. To wild** is a discussion of wildness as a potential tool for revisiting non-urban art walking. I propose revisiting wonder as a potential strategy for art making. The arguments of Section 3.2 are:

- that wildness in its living, unfixed and fluid condition is a useful tool for making art about fieldwork and fieldwalking;
- that wonder is a potent tool for departing from the work of previous non-urban art walkers such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton; and
- that wildness can be used as a subversive strategy to interrogate science in the field and, when used in different concentrations, can produce a variety of art approaches.



Figure 1.44 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Wet season fish in ephemeral pool.

The third essay, **Section 3.3 Conversations with trees**, contrasts ordinary experiences with the existing model of wilderness that is commonly employed in the Kimberley. The idea of a conversational, relational and non-representational way of artmaking is proposed. The arguments of Section 3.3 are:

- that *the walkingcountry* is an ordinary wilderness, a place where one oscillated between the strange and the familiar. To talk of a contemporary non-urban art requires us to re-express this oscillation in new ways;
- conversations can be had with the nonhuman by reconfiguring relationships within an artwork (artist, object, audience, environment) in a way that is less representational; and
- because of the importance of the nonhuman in non-urban areas, moving beyond representational models of art is a crucial strategy.

The fourth saunter, **Section 3.4 herethere**, addresses the realities of making art about non-urban areas for urban audiences. The idea of making art that *transforms and not translates* one place into another is discussed in reference to my work. I also refer to specific examples of other artists' works in Appendix A.8 to support my work. I propose a more fluid and evolving definition of place that has affected my art practice.

The arguments of Section 3.4 are:

- that a number of artists have created art where two places are brought into relationship in a transformative way. This entails firstly, the folding up of the space in-between (and not its erasure) and secondly, an interdigitation or involution of the two places; and
- that the very definition of place has been changed. Contemporary places are about connections. In places things (people, tools, plants, rocks, animals) are *brought into relation* by events.

The ideas of the fourth saunter are further elaborated in the practical example of the **strange strolls** exhibition and my work *To Meander and back* in Appendix A.2, the fifth saunter. The expanded use of sound in *fieldwork/fieldwalking* has been a fundamental shift in my practice. The arguments of this key saunter are:

- that hearing *and listening* are performed in a different way from seeing because sound is immersive and has heightened spatial and temporal characteristics. Equally importantly, listening awakens our awareness of the rest of our senses to make us more skilful at being poly-sensual;
- that using sound in art makes available different methods of creating art experiences, such as binaural recording, for re-imagining non-urban places in an embodied way;
- that the soundwalks introduce a particular type of disjunctive experience distinct from listening to music CDs on walkmans or having a conversation on a mobile phone;
- that the soundwalks were transformational because they clearly imbricated the other place or *awayplace* (of, say *the walkingcountry*) with Fremantle: each of the places (*here* and *there*) was transformed; and
- that the sphere of the artwork is substantially extended in sound art walking projects. This is because of the transformations were experienced by the participants during and subsequent to the walk; and by passers by who chanced upon the participants walking in public spaces.



Figures 1.45 and 1.46. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Mystery hole dug by animals (left) Biblio Gorge (right).

The final saunter (**Section 3.5 invisible countries**) discusses *the walkingcountry* in terms of silence, stillness and lostness. It revolves around how we might be blind to the perception of, and reality of, “invisible countries” or places that fall outside of mainstream perception. One example is all the life in an ecosystem that we ignore because we are not used to being quiet and attentive to the world. Another important political example is the silencing of Indigenous Australia as part of colonialism. I propose four different *processes of silence* that start with oppression and end with moving *from* silence and taking heed. The examination of these processes leads to the arguments of Section 3.5 which are:

- That we can reconcile the “emptiness” of Euro-Australian belonging by reframing belonging as something that *takes place* and that must be *acted out* in a continuing negotiation; and
- That the path ahead is unclear and winding because the kinds of adventures needed must be flexible and evolving. It involves both hearing and acting, speaking with and listening to both the human and nonhuman as we negotiate our fluid places in the world.

1.10 To depart

The Exegesis discusses my artworks by linking them to other artworks about walking and/or scientific fieldwork. This includes considering the visual language used and the (broader) sensed *encounter* that happens when experiencing the work of other artists dealing with similar themes. The Exegesis considers the intentions of these artists and myself. It sketches a theoretical background for my work, relating it to wider debates about key issues such as the human/nature binary and representation. A strong concern in my research was how my artworks relate to the everyday practices that surround them, such as those in scientific fieldwork, or outback tourism: as “the practices through which nature is manifest in social action” (Instone, 2004, p. 134). How nature is perceived in everyday life influences how my works are understood. Moreover, since I believe that art can contribute to changing these perceptions, my artworks have a role to play in the evolution of such perceptions. The art does not just reflect what is around it but takes an active part in conversations. Underlying my practice is a commitment to environmental action and the growth of an environmentally healthy society, and at times this Exegesis touches upon such issues.

In opening up possibilities I cannot provide definitive answers – either to the questions that I hope have been raised in the work – or in the form of a definitive statement of the intentions behind each of the works. Nevertheless I hope that I will have provided a coherent guidebook to help in your interpretation of the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project. The concluding Section 4.0 draws out some findings, revisits the research question of the Thesis and concludes with the path my art practice might take in the future.



Figures 1.47 and 1.48. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Immature Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo with host Red-backed Fairy Wren family.

2.0 Artworks exhibited as part of the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* Thesis

Title	Date	Exhibition/Location	Medium	Description	Dimensions
<i>Zoo for the species</i>	2003	National Review of Live Art/ Midland	7 track x 11 minute audio installation based on 7 walks through the streets of Perth	This work is discussed in Section 3.3.8 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.3.67 to 3.3.72 and 3.3.76 to 3.3.80.	11 minute loop
<i>Ordinary Wilderness: Murmuring Polyphony</i>	2004	Books04/ Noosa Regional Art Gallery, Noosa and Semi/ Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	Digitally printed bound book	The pages of this book were split horizontally into four sections so that readers could mix and match images and text (see Figures 2.12 to 2.15).	31 x 30 x 1 cm
<i>Four Tales from Natural History</i>	2004	Four Tales from Natural History/ Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Northbridge	Solo installation with wooden lecterns and four track 15 minute looped sound track	This work is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.4.	Variable. Lecterns 120 cm high
<i>ecosystem energy underneath</i>	2004	Semi/ Kurb Gallery and Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	Electro-luminescent paper and digital prints	This work was an experiment in combining light and images to suggest the underlying energetics or liveness of <i>the walkingcountry</i>	Prints 15 x 10 cm
<i>herethere</i>	2004	Semi/ Kurb Gallery and Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	Two sound art walks between the Spectrum Project Space and the Kurb Gallery	This work is discussed in Section 3.4.2 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.4.17 to 3.4.21 and 3.4.37 to 3.4.46.	Variable. Walks 10 minutes long
<i>Dam view</i> (work in progress)	2004	Semi/ Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	Digital print on paper	The image is derived from a heavily pixellated scene of the “most beautiful view” of <i>the walkingcountry</i> (see Figures 3.4.22 and 3.4.23).	600 cm x 300 cm
<i>herethere</i>	2004	Semi/ Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	Mixed media installation with video projection. Found object (hide), stones, ephemera.	This work is discussed in Section 3.4.2 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.4.13 to 3.4.14, 3.4.17 to 3.4.21 and 3.4.37 to 3.4.52.	Video 52 minutes long Tent 200 x 190 x 190 cm
<i>upside down tent</i>	2004	Semi/ Kurb Gallery	Installation with found objects (tent and lamp)	This work was the reversal of the <i>herethere</i> hide at the Spectrum Project Space. The work can be seen in Figure 3.4.48.	Tent 190 x 190 x 190 cm
<i>Slide documentation of the project</i> (work in progress)	2004	Semi/ Spectrum Project Space, Northbridge	80 slides	Slides of strandings and other images of <i>the walkingcountry</i> . Strandings discussed in Section 3.3.2, 3.3.9 and 3.5.1.1 of the Exegesis.	Variable
<i>To Meander and Back</i>	2005	strange strolls/ Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle	32 minute sound art work for stereo headphones and walker	This work is discussed in Appendix A.2 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 2.39 to 2.41 and A.2.16 to A.2.21, A.2.25 to A.2.29, A.2.33 and A.2.35.	Variable. 32 minute sound-track

Title	Date	Exhibition/Location	Medium	Description	Dimensions
<i>The Before (A work in 3 parts)</i>	2004 to 2005	For nothing / The Bank Gallery, Midland	Mixed media installation with audio component.	This work explored the limits of the artwork by being made out of the "pre-mains" of other artworks including readings from timings made of the distances of various streets in Fremantle as part of the strange strolls project.	Includes Ten minute sound track.
<i>Zoo for the species</i>	2003 (2006)	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle.	7 track x 11 minute audio installation based on 7 walks through the streets of Perth	This work is discussed in Section 3.3.8 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 2.1 to 2.3.	11 minute loop
<i>Fieldology</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 1.	Mixed media installation with Camp 52, strandings, tents and field samples.	This installation included my campsite (52) where I camped for the duration of the show as well of the many strandings that I did during the project (see Figures 2.4 to 2.19).	Variable.
<i>Wandering around taking photographs</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. First Floor and stairwell to second floor.	Digital pigment prints on archive paper	253 small details of <i>the walkingcountry</i> spread throughout Gallery One and spilling into other spaces of the exhibition. Some are photographs of strandings <i>in situ</i> . Examples of images have been threaded through the thesis document (see also Figures 2.20 to 2.27).	10 x 15 cm
<i>herethere (left/right)</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 1.	8 minute looped video projected on to the inner surface of a tent.	This video brought the practice of walking back to it's phenomenological origin by strapping two video cameras to my left and right feet (see Figures 2.28 to 2.29).	8 minute loop
<i>herethere (hide)</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 2.	Mixed media installation with video projection and found objects (hide and folding chair).	This work is a reworking of the original tent installation in the Semi show which is discussed in Section 3.4.2 of the Exegesis and is illustrated in Figures 2.30 to 2.35.	Video 52 minutes long Tent 200 x 190 x 190 cm
<i>Objects accepted and rejected by Sandy and Mr Tip at their bowers</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 2.	Camping table and plastic bags full of found and created objects.	The objects originally created for the Semi exhibition were taken to the walkingcountry and used in a number of experiments with two male bower birds: Sandy and Mr Tip (see Section 4.3 and Figures 2.35).	Table 80 x 60 x 80 cm
<i>Inhabitation</i>	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle.	Digital pigment prints on archive paper.	Small caterpillar houses built from spinifex leaves can be seen hanging in glossy green Wet Season spinifex clumps (see Figures 2.36 to 2.38).	6 prints 42.0 x 29.7 cm
<i>To Meander and Back</i>	2005 (2006)	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle.	32 minute sound art work for stereo headphones and walker	This key work was re-presented from the strange strolls exhibition (see Figures 2.39 to 2.41).	Variable. 32 minute sound-track

Title	Date	Exhibition/Location	Medium	Description	Dimensions
Nightwalk	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 4.	Looped video installation filmed using a night vision scope projected directly onto the limestone wall.	Brushing through a night landscape, galumphing over bushes and spinifex we see fragments of a journey lit by torchlight. A disk of light appears. We head towards it until it is finally revealed as the reflective label of a backpack stranded in a tree (see Figures 2.42 and 2.43).	8 minute circular looped video projection 250 cm high
Sleepwalking	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 4.	Looped video installation projected 12 cm across directly onto the limestone wall.	A figure in a labcoat sleepwalks back and forth across a circular nightscape. The images is filmed using an enhanced night vision scope (see Figure 2.44).	5 minute circular looped video projected 12 cm across
Night vision	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 4.	Digital pigment prints on archive paper	In a darkened room you can pick up a torch to illuminate 6 large prints. Each print uses a night vision scope to capture details of camp 51 in <i>the walkingcountry</i> (see Figures 2.45 to 2.50 and also 3.5.9).	84 x 84 cm
Four Tales from Natural History	2004 (2006)	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 5.	Solo installation with wooden lecterns, four track 15 minute looped sound track and infra-red motion detectors.	This work was reconfigured from the 2004 solo show using concealed infra-red motion detectors. It is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the exegesis and this version is illustrated in Figure 2.51.	Variable. Lecterns 120 cm high
herethere (abovebelow)	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Upstairs foyer.	Looped video installation projected portrait-wise into a stairwell.	A figure in a labcoat climbs up and down a hill. She climbs in and out of site for 32 minutes in the morning sun. The image is filmed on its side so that it can be projected in a stairwell (see Figure 2.52).	32 minute circular looped video projected portrait-wise into a stairwell.
Compass (Blacksoil). Naturalist. Blacksoil Photopoint Time Passage. Ash (Tracks).	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Upstairs foyer.	Diptych of conventional digital print (left) and lenticular 3D image (right)	This series of 4 images pair digital prints of details of the walkingcountry with lenticular 3d images. They are reproduced in Figures 2.53 to 2.57.	123.1 X 50 cm
Geologist Series	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 6.	Digital pigment prints on archive paper	Images derived from a collaborative mapping project with a geologist. They capture the geologist's bodily gestures acting out the process of mapping: how the geology of the Kimberley valley fits together or grasping a delicate flower husk (see Figures 2.58 to 2.65).	78 x 52 cm
Geological Mapping over 5 days	2006	fieldwork/field-walking / Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, Fremantle. Gallery 6.	5 day sound-track.	Two folding chairs stand in the centre of the gallery. From either end you can hear a spatial conversation between the geologist and the artist recorded over 5 days. At times they move close together as they cross the landscape sharing their deliberations. At other times they are out of range of each other and their signals break up into private thoughts (see Figure 2.59).	5 days.



Figures 2.1 to 2.3. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing the setting for *Zoo for the species* in the outdoor courtyard, 2003 (2006), Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.4 and 2.5. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing Kimberley Sandstone Range Blanket, before (July 2005) and after (February 2006), 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.6 and 2.7. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing Kimberley Sandstone Range Blanket, and Labcoat (before (July 2004) on right and after (February 2006) on left), 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.8 and 2.9. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Camp 52* inhabited during the exhibition as part of *Fieldology*, 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.



Figures 2.10 and 2.11. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Camp 52* in a shaft of sunlight, as part of *Fieldology* 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.12 to 2.15. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Ordinary Wilderness: Murmuring Polyphony*, 2004, digitally printed bound book at Camp 52, as part of *Fieldology* 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.16 to 2.18. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing detail of *Fieldology* 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





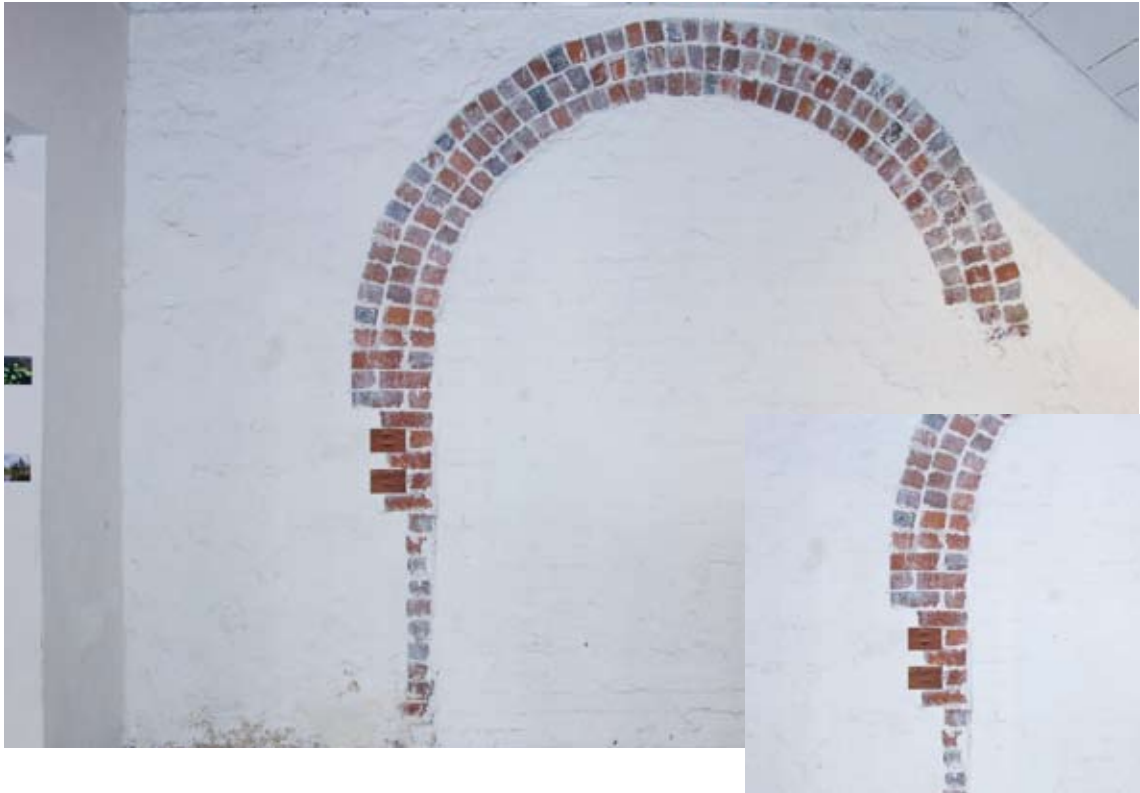
Figure 2.19 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing detail of *Fieldology* 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.20 and 2.21. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006, spread throughout the lower floor and into the cartway and stairwells, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Spider photograph in foyer stairwell (above) and a flock of photographs on the uneven limestone walls in Gallery One (below).





Figures 2.22 to 2.24. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006, spread throughout the lower floor and into the cartway and stairwells, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Wallaby tracks in Gallery Three (above) and one of the accompanying strandings (*Kangaroo Love*, July 2004 to February 2006) in Gallery One (below).





Figures 2.25 to 2.27. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006, spread throughout the lower floor and into the cartway and stairwells, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Stranded shoes (above), installation detail (right) and print reproduced full size (below).





Figures 2.28 and 2.29. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *herethere* (leftright), 2006, Gallery One, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Above screen shots, below installation.





Figures 2.30 and 2.31. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *herethere (hide)*, 2006, Gallery Two, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.32 and 2.33. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *herethere (hide)*, 2006, Gallery Two, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Detail of projection inside hide and bower stone pile outside.





Figures 2.34 and 2.35. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *herethere (hide)*, 2006, Gallery Two, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Sandy performing to a female at his bower (above) and *Objects accepted and rejected* by Sandy and Mr Tip at their bowers (below).



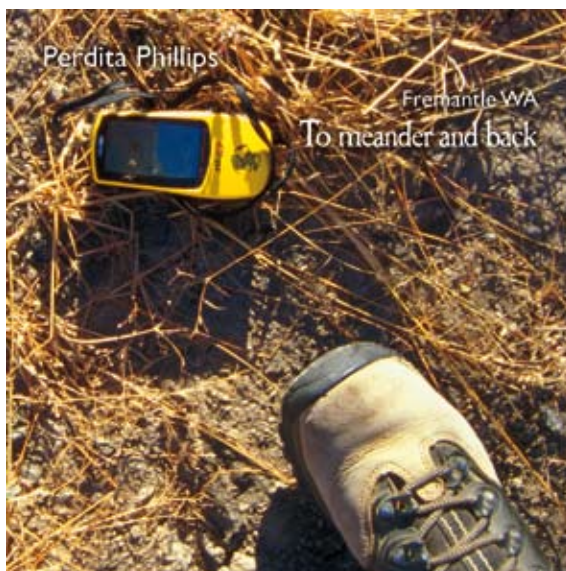




Figures 2.36 and 2.37 (previous page) and 2.38 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *inhabitation*, 2006, Gallery Three, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.



Figures 2.39 to 2.41. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *To Meander and Back*, 2005, Gallery Three, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Installation shot and detail of Blacksoil photopoint on front and back of CD cover.





Figures 2.42 and 2.43. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Nightwalk*, 2006, Gallery Four, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. View of installation (below) and detail of the final scene with Deuter backpack (above).

Figure 2.44 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Sleepwalking*, 2006, Gallery Four, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Detail of projection onto rough limestone wall.



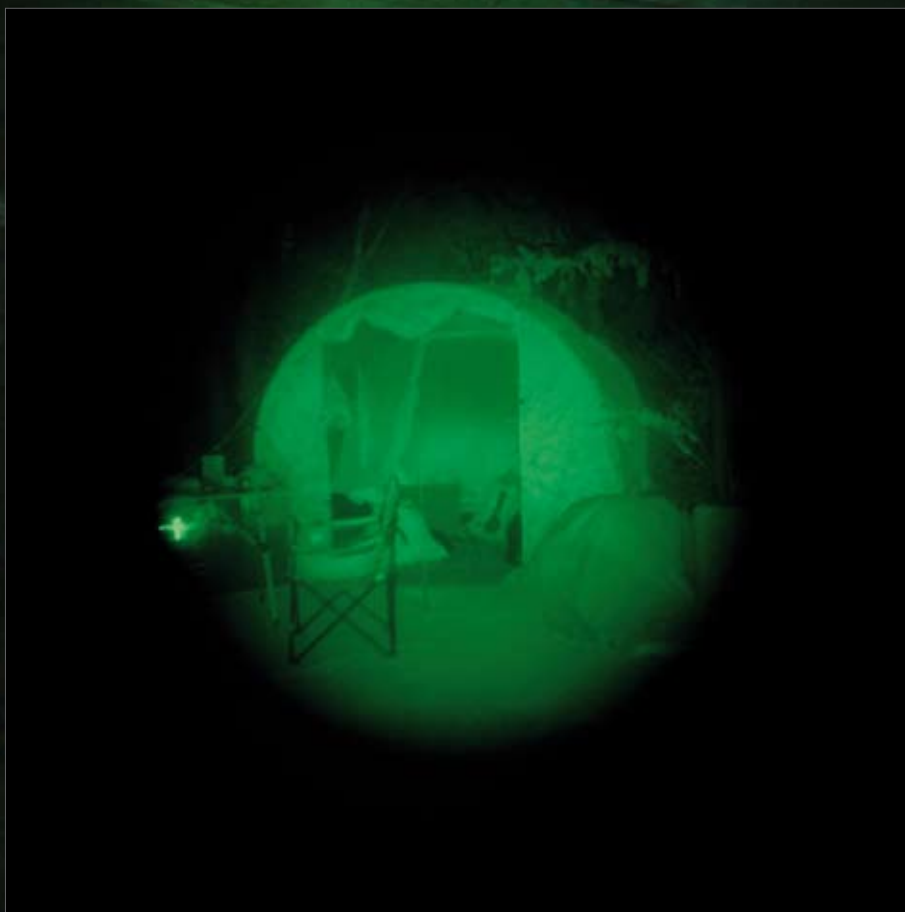


Figures 2.45 and 2.46. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Night Vision*, 2006, Moors Building Contemporary Art Gallery. View below showing the same work installed on the right in Gallery Four. (See also Figure 3.5.9).





Figures 2.47 and 2.48. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Night Vision*, 2006, Gallery Four, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.49 and 2.50. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Night Vision*, 2006, Gallery Four, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.

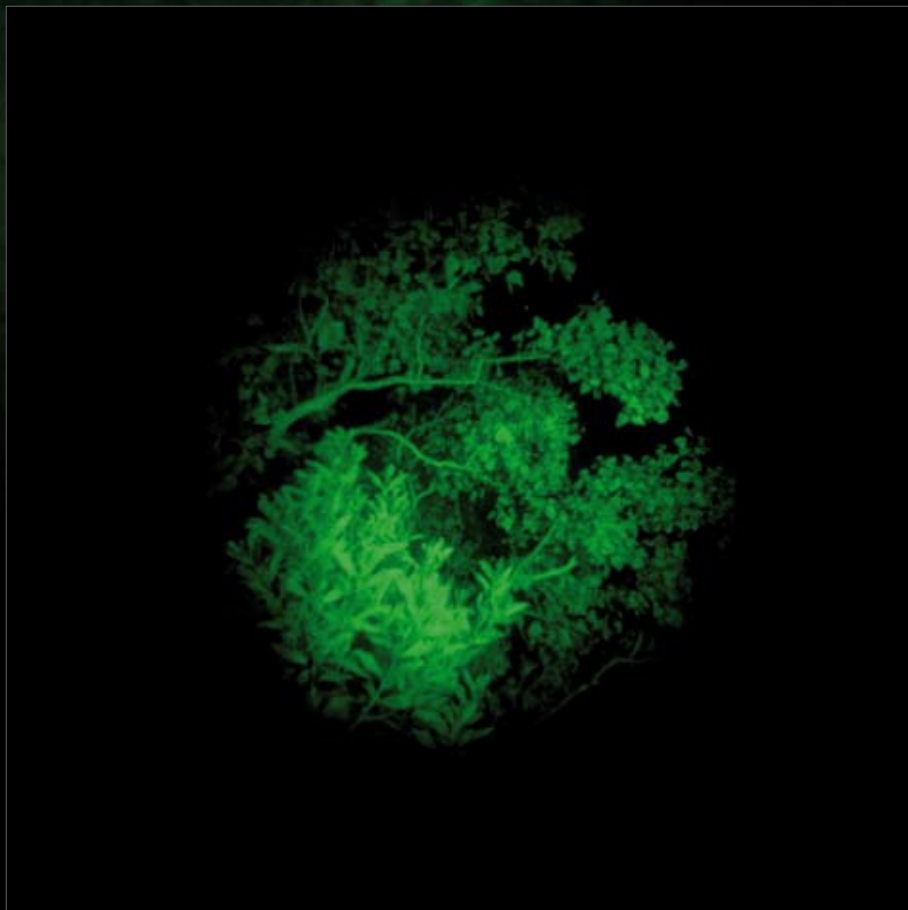


Figure 2.51 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Four Tales from Natural History*, 2004, Gallery Five, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figure 2.52 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing different states of the video *herethere (abovebelow)* projected onto the brickwork of the Foyer stairwell, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.



Figure 2.53 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing the installation of lenticular 3D artworks, Upper Foyer, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.

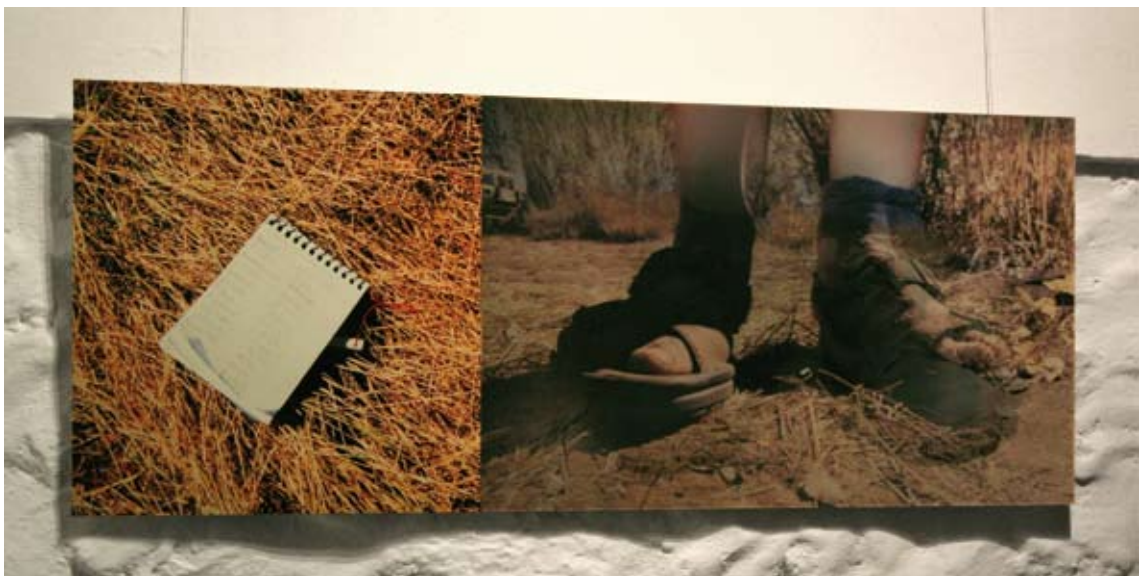


Figure 2.54 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Naturalist*, Upper Foyer, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Photographing the effect of lenticular 3D technology is very difficult because of the optical principles involved.



Figure 2.55 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Compass*, Upper Foyer, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Digital approximation of lenticular 3D technology.



Figure 2.56 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Blacksoil Photopoint Time Passage*, Upper Foyer, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Digital approximation of lenticular 3D technology.



Figure 2.57 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Ash (Tracks)*, Upper Foyer, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Digital approximation of lenticular 3D technology.



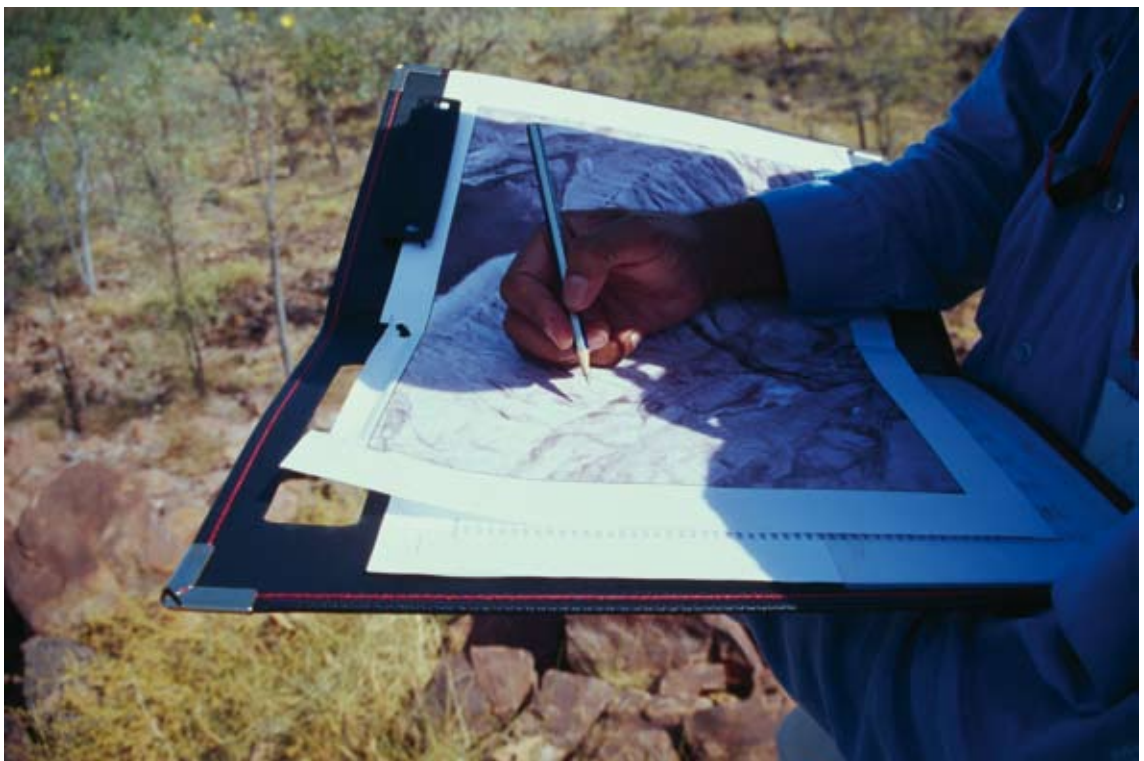
Figure 2.58 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing one of the *Geologist Series* digital prints, Gallery Six, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.



Figure 2.59 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing Gallery Six with the *Geologist Series* digital prints and *Geological Mapping over 5 Days*, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. The two camping chairs in the middle of the gallery allowed the listener to stay and hear the field conversations.



Figures 2.60 and 2.61. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Geologist Series* digital prints, Gallery Six, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figures 2.62 and 2.63. *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Geologist Series* digital prints, Gallery Six, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.





Figure 2.64 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing *Geologist Series* digital print, Gallery Six, 2006, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.



Figure 2.65 *fieldwork/fieldwalking* exhibition showing invite image (from the *Geologist Series* digital prints, 2006), Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.

3.0 Exegesis

A guide to the fieldwork/fieldwalking project

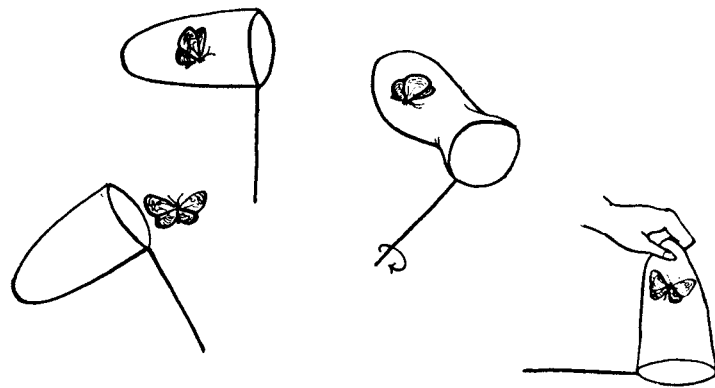
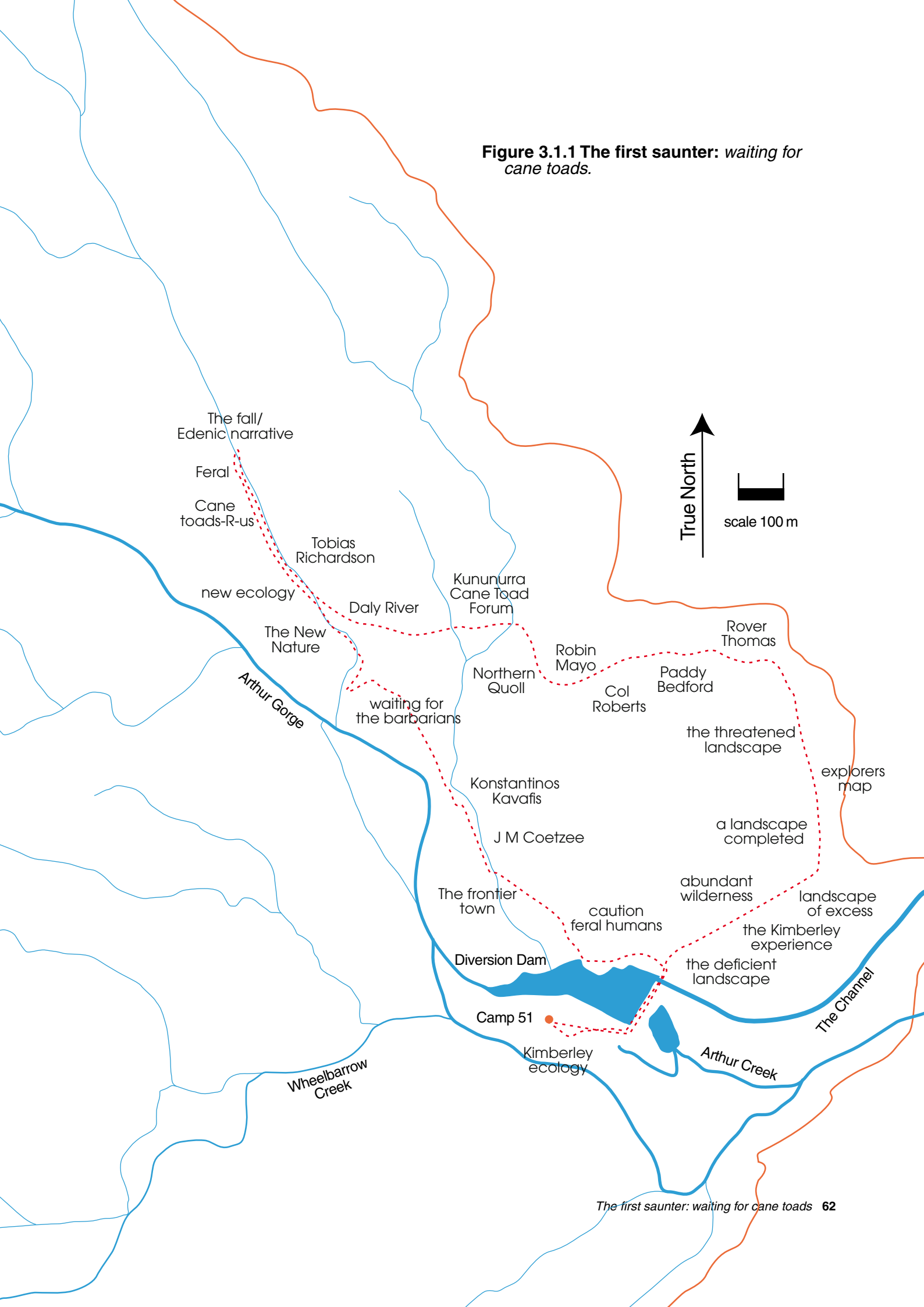


Figure 3.1.1 The first saunter: waiting for cane toads.



3.1 Waiting for cane toads

Section 3.1 introduces the site the project – *the walkingcountry* – from the perspective of its cultural and environmental setting of the Kimberley. The section broadly introduces the environment of the Kimberley and the ecological changes that have taken place or will take place in the future. The issues covered include why I was horrified to hear the attitude of the scientists at the Kununurra Community Cane Toad Forum (March 2005) and the drawbacks of “waiting for the barbarians”. A number of questions generated by the Forum are presented. Section 3.1 examines the meaning of feral and the question of belonging in Australian culture. Three versions of the feral are presented: one that strengthens the boundary between humans and the nonhuman, one that celebrates the possible diversity that feral spaces can generate, and one that cautions against the homogenisation that feral “invasions” can produce. Questions are raised as to the relationship of environmentalism to scientific ecology; to the role of emotion and reason in environmental issues; and to the limitations of “the Fall” as a framework for conservation arguments in Australia. Overall Section 3.1 progresses from the general to the specific and it leads on to more detailed issues about my work covered in subsequent sections of the Exegesis.



Figure 3.1.2 Welcome to the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley: The Last Frontier, just north of Warmun, August (dry season) 2005.

3.1.1 Welcome to the walkingcountry

Welcome to the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley: the last frontier. Welcome to the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project. And welcome to *the walkingcountry*, the concern of a large part of this project. *The walkingcountry* is a portion of a valley and water catchment located at 16° 2' 33.9" South 128° 23' 40.56" East on Arthur Creek in the east Kimberley. It is an open tropical savanna woodland over grass on mostly skeletal and often rocky soils. Around the small diversion dam on Arthur Creek that holds water for downstream irrigation, are tall *Melaleuca leucadendron* trees. For recreation, the lease owners and their friends sometimes throw a line into the dam or bushwalk up Arthur Gorge to the main dam wall. The valley floor to the north of the diversion dam is lightly grazed by cattle. To the south, and on the rocky hills, the land is unused. Rain in the Kimberley falls mostly in the summer months between December and February (the Wet) and, in heavy monsoonal or cyclonic rain, turns the dry dusty conditions into deep mud, flooding the country and making it impassable even on foot. Part of the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project traces the changing pattern of the seasons. For reasons of year-round access, safety and economy, *the walkingcountry* was chosen close to the Great Northern Highway, 68 km south of Kununurra¹.



Figure 3.1.3 Diversion Dam looking west to the Saw Range, *the walkingcountry*, February 2004.

¹ Living and working in the Kimberley is expensive and for the majority of the visits I could not afford to hire a vehicle and was thus reliant on the Greyhound bus stopping on the highway nearby. I am grateful for the substantial generosity and charity of the owners of, and workers on, the farming lease nearby.

3.1.2 Kimberley ecology

Appendix A.7 summarises the ecology of the Kimberley. In general the Kimberley is geologically old and stable with nutrient poor soils. Climatically the Kimberley is a challenging place to live with the hot to very hot temperatures combining with high humidity during the Wet season. In the Dry, surface water is uncommon and permanent water bodies become the focus of wildlife. Year to year rainfall is temporally and spatially variable with an annual figure of 790.7 mm at Kununurra. It wasn't until the mid 1980s that the last stretch of Highway One was sealed through the Kimberley and the density of people and roads in this region is still very low. Nevertheless (and probably because of this) tourism is the second largest industry in the Kimberley².



Figure 3.1.4 Looking west across the valley towards the Saw Range from the top of the eastern cliffs, July, 2004. In the foreground is the disturbed ground of an old gravel quarry, then Sandy Creek, a large scald and the mid-valley low hills. Hidden between these hills and the Saw Range is Wheelbarrow Creek. The dark valley on the extreme right is Arthur Gorge.

More generally the Kimberley is most often described in terms of its remoteness, harshness, or emptiness. In her lexical cartography of the Kimberley, Jay Arthur (2002) identifies deficiency (stony, sparse, desolate, wasteland) and excess (ancient, vast, wild, hostile, untapped resource³) as common themes in historical literary representations of the landscapes of the Kimberley. She has shown these graphically on maps of the Kimberley in Figures 3.1.5, 3.1.9, 3.1.10 and 3.1.13 to 3.1.15. I suspect that even today, it

² By value the largest industry in the Kimberley is mining and the most extensive is pastoralism (Kimberley Development Commission, 2004)

³ With "untameable appeal" Pacific Island Travel (2003).

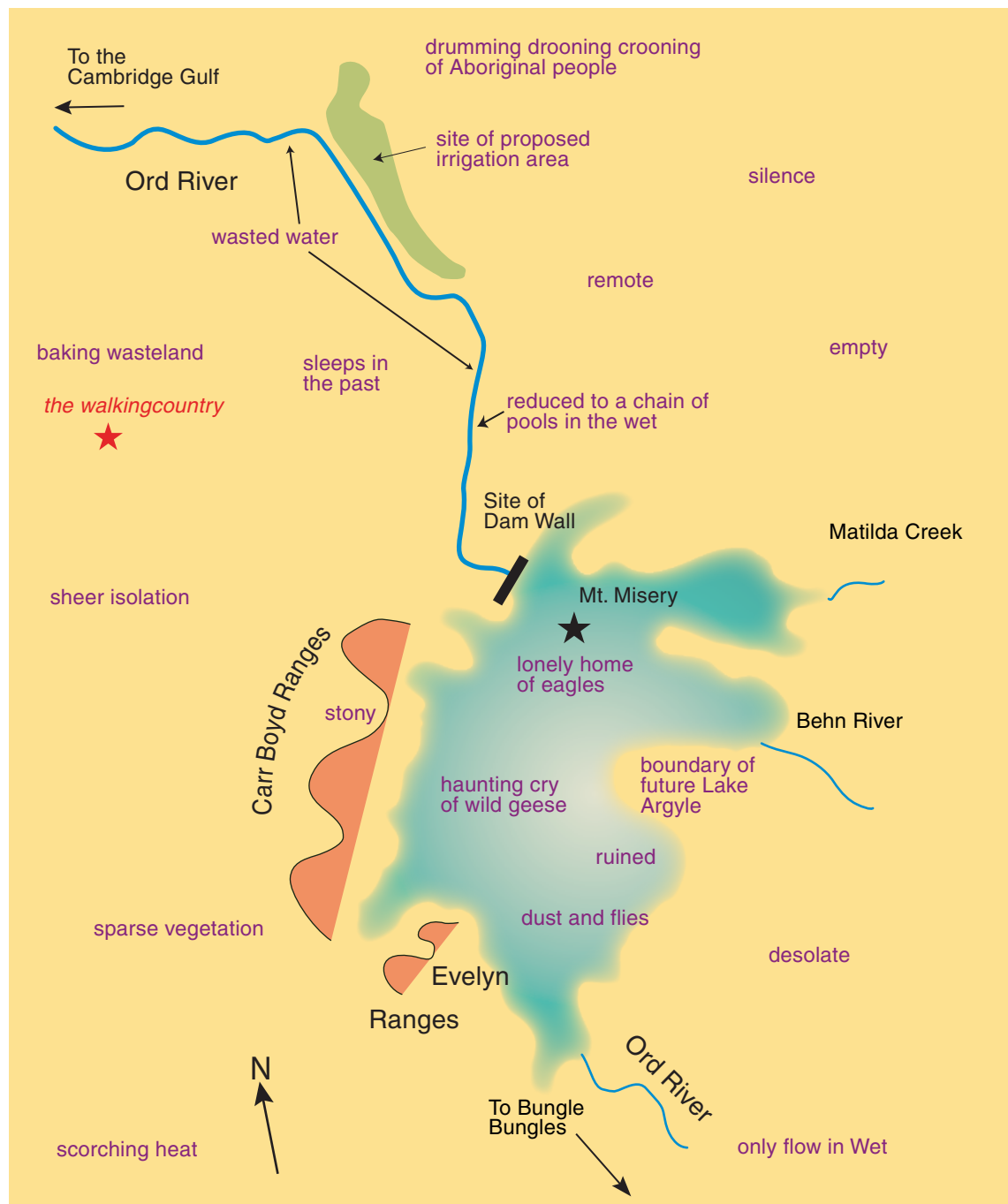


Figure 3.1.5 The Deficient Landscape (adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 192).

may be that people are responding to the physical energetics of the environment, when they feel that there is a sense of “something waiting to happen” in Kimberley places. Certainly the use of themes deficiency and excess allowed the colonisers to see their activities as completing the “unfinished” natural environment. Such reasoning forms a large part of past and present pro-development language in the Kimberley.



Figures 3.1.6 to 3.1.8. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Diversion Dam Photopoint (the classic viewpoint used in *Dam view*) during the wet seasons of February 2004 (above) and February 2006 (right).

3.1.3 The Kimberley experience

When setting up the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project I needed to find a research location in a non-urban area and I chose the Kimberley because I was attracted to its beauty and aliveness at the same time as I was ambivalent about the way it is represented. In popular culture the Kimberley is frequently identified as a wilderness area⁴ – a place of rugged isolation, for adventure and achievement -- for a type of encounter dubbed the “Kimberley experience.” What is the nature of a Kimberley experience? Does it exist outside the tourist brochures? In what sense are the places of the Kimberley unique? The Shire of Derby West Kimberley defines the “True Kimberley” as

The dramatic and beautiful landscape of gorges, islands, mountain ranges, mud flats, boab trees and the mighty Fitzroy River;

- The colours, wildlife, abundant fishing grounds and pastoral country;
- The extreme environment with huge tides (the highest in the Australia), and the two distinct seasons, the Wet and the Dry, with tropical storms and floods in the Wet season; and
- The opportunities and untapped potential (Shire of Derby West Kimberley, 2006, p. 3)

It would seem that to have a Kimberley experience is to tap into the drama, beauty, energy and vitality⁵ that the surrounding environment provides. It is apparent that contemporary Kimberley culture is strongly underpinned by both an essentialist exoticism (a special essence that is the Kimberley) and a frontier mentality. There seems to be a

⁴ See Section 3.2.2.

⁵ Vitalism? See Fraser, Kember and Lury (2005) for notes on some recent examples of vitalism in contemporary theory. Also Elkins (1997) and Mitchell (2005).

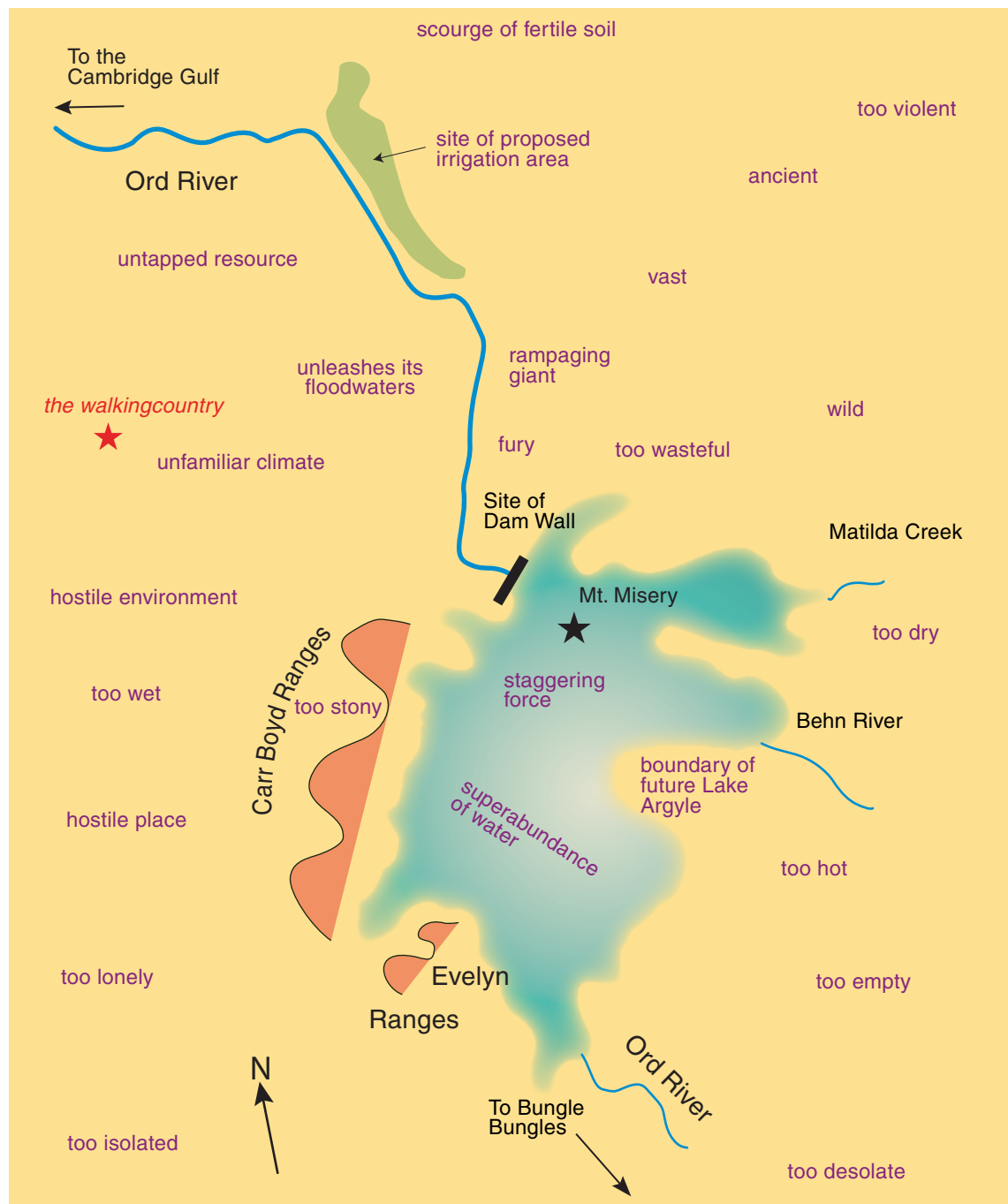


Figure 3.1.9 The Landscape of Excess (adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 194).

search for uniqueness that has an uneasy relationship with an acknowledged *Other*⁶. For example, the Shire of Derby West Kimberley goes on to characterise the distinctiveness of its people as “Kimberley Spirit” that results from:

- The remoteness that creates a pioneering spirit and common bond;
- The strong presence of Aboriginal culture and language;
- The mix of people from many backgrounds and cultures who live in harmony;
- The history of struggle, conflict, endeavour and resilience;

⁶ The Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley (Motto: the last frontier) notes in its vision statement: “We have the ability to forge our own future and recognise that we are unique. To capitalise on this uniqueness is an important component in our future success” (2005, p. 4).

- The connectedness of the people to the land, the landscape and the seasons;
- The friendly, welcoming style of the people and the relaxed lifestyle; and
- The feeling of “Coming Home” (Shire of Derby West Kimberley, 2006, p. 3).

What determines the characteristics of Kimberley culture, are remoteness *and* connection, harmony *and* conflict, pioneering spirit *and* belonging.

In her work Jay Arthur also points out a more contemporary tension between the triad of an “abundant wilderness”, an “explorer’s map” and a “threatened landscape”. The first case sees the landscape as plentiful and “whole and beautiful *as it is*” (2002, p. 198). For all its harshness the Kimberley is a version of Eden. The non-Indigenous human remains separate from the landscape but is received sympathetically. In the second case



Figure 3.1.10 The Completed Landscape (adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 195).

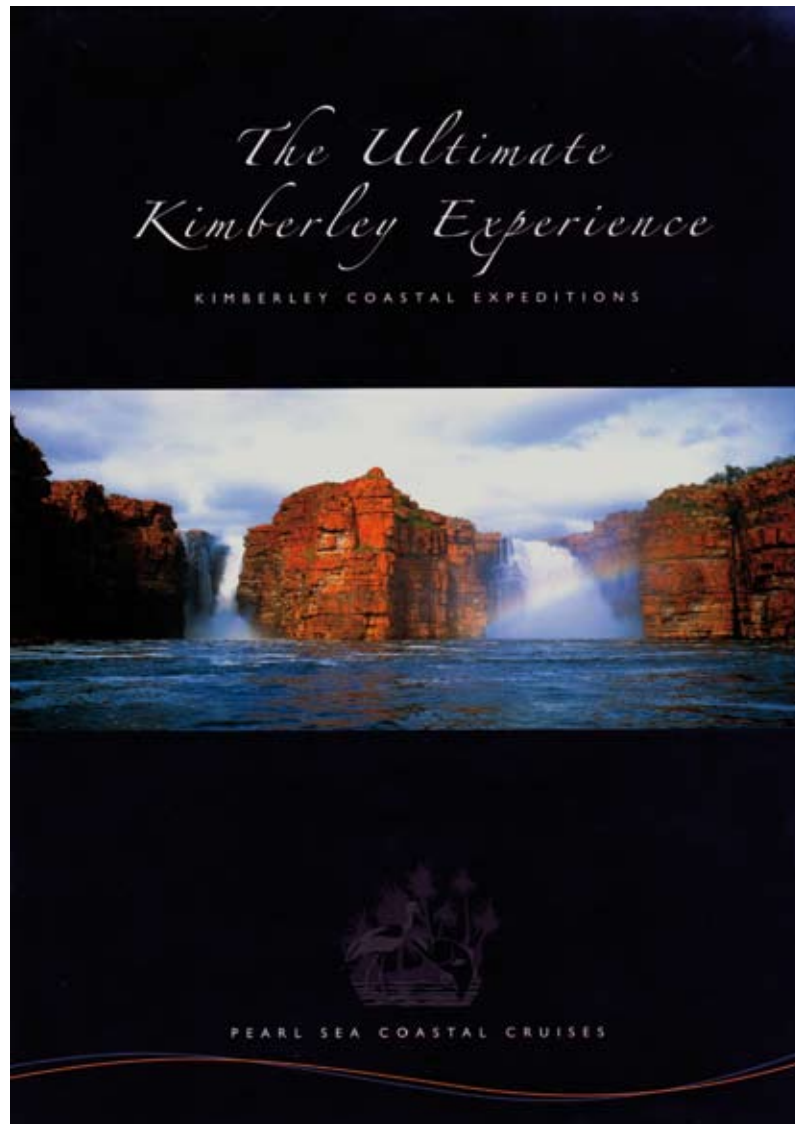


Figure 3.1.11 An example of a Kimberley experience from a tourist brochure.

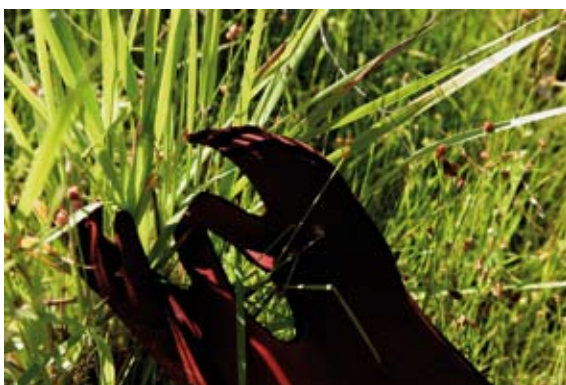


Figure 3.1.12 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Stranded skin (july 2005 to February 2006).

the Kimberley provides the tourist and settler with a pioneering landscape ready for exploration and discovery and for the naming of its empty spaces. Again the outsider holds power over the place. In the third case it is “a ‘last’ place, and a landscape under threat” (2002, p. 201) -- at risk from the touch of Western culture. Whilst none of these views threaten the power of the coloniser to determine the landscape, the fact that they are competing model poten-



Figure 3.1.13 The Abundant Wilderness (adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 198).



Figure 3.1.14 The Explorer's Map (adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 200).



Figure 3.1.15 The Threatened Landscape (Adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 201).



Figures 3.1.16 to 3.1.19. Images from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Stranded skin July 2005 to February 2006.

Figure 3.1.20 Rover Thomas, *Barramundi Dreaming*, 1985, earth pigment and bush gum on plywood, 90 x 180.5 cm, (Brody, 1997, p. 71). The Barramundi Dreaming goes through the pit of the Argyle Diamond Mine.

Figure 3.1.21 Paddy Bedford, *Untitled*, 2003, gouache on board 50 x 70 cm (Bedford, 2003, p. 37).

tially opens up “spaces-in-between”⁷. The implication is that the original process of colonisation, as one that “completes” the landscape by vanquishing deficiency and excess (and closing the frontier), is incomplete.

⁷ The concept of space in-between was theorised by Homi Bhabha in the *Location of Culture* (1994). Referring to the African American artist Renée Green, he writes of an intellectual and metaphorical space that exists between firm categories, that exists at the interstices. It is a space of overlap where domains of difference are displaced and where intersubjective and collective experiences exist. The term has developed wide currency within human geography and my use here is congruent with other consequent applications of the term.

Figure 3.1.22 Nadeen Lovell, stands in front of her *The Bungle Bungle* mural, 1992, Lovell Diversion Gallery, Kununurra (Lovell, 2006). Oil on six stretched canvas total length 1100 cm x180 cm.



Figure 3.1.23 Col Roberts, Middle Springs near Kununurra (in *Australia's Kimberley: Visions of a lasting wilderness* by Roberts, 1995, p. 163). Col Roberts is one example of a number of landscape photographers who have specialised in the Kimberley.

Rod Giblett has analysed descriptions in literature of Kimberley wetlands, principally through Mary Durack's *Kings in Grass Castles* (1959), and identified two contrasting representations: as bogs (uncanny, negative) and bilabongs (positive), and notes that, despite the overriding dominance of the "imperialist adventure story" (Giblett, 1996, p. 77), there is also a struggle between competing elements of romantic, picturesque, sublime and natural history frames of view. Both Arthur and Giblett have identified slippages in the dominant narratives of how the Kimberley is represented, spaces-in-between.

3.1.4 Regional art

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project addresses these spaces-in-between by creating contemporary art. The Kimberley region has a robust aesthetic identity and many painters have made it their subject. It features prominently in the area of Australian Aboriginal art. In the east Kimberley, for example there are rich and vibrant styles of painting at Warmun (south of the *walkingcountry*) and in Kununurra (to the north).

There is also considerable output by competent nature photographers and a host of artists who produce tourist-oriented realist landscape paintings. In Figure 3.1.22 Local identity and gallery proprietor Nadeen Lovell stands in front of her regionally eminent work, *The Bungle Bungle* mural (1992) and Robyn Mayo's work exhibits fine draftsmanship (Figures 3.1.24 and 3.1.26). But I have always felt that neither of these two latter genres, landscape photography or realist landscape art, have produced art that has engaged with places outside of deficiency, excess, Eden, exploration or threat. Examples of art that questions these categories are much harder to find. I position my work as searching for *places-in-between*⁸.

⁸ This is further developed in Sections 3.4.3, 3.4.4, A.2.4 and A.2.5.



Figure 3.1.24 Robyn Mayo, *Tropical Banksia*, 1994, watercolour on paper 77 x 57 cm, (in *Kimberley Odyssey* by Mayo, 1996, p. 68).

Figure 3.1.25 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

Figure 3.1.26 Robyn Mayo, *Way into Osmond Valley*, 1990, watercolour on paper 76 x 150 cm, (Mayo, 1994, p. 32).



Figures 3.1.27 and 3.1.28. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

3.1.5 Cane toads

3.1.5.1 The Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum

On the weekend of 19th and 20th of March 2005 scientists and local community members met to discuss the imminent presence of cane toads in the Kimberley at the Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum (subsequently referred to as the Forum). I found out about it after seeing a poster at the local shopping centre noticeboard. I had decided to attend to find out more about a local environmental issue. This was the first public meeting to discuss the arrival of the cane toad in Western Australia. The first day was devoted to a scientific forum about the ecological effects of cane toads and the

status of current scientific research. There were displays of cane toad art projects by the local primary schools and of native fauna. There was a sunset cruise on Lake Kununurra for the conference speakers and on the Saturday night there was a cocktail evening at the Lovell Diversion Art Gallery (which I gatecrashed). The next day there was a community day with more information about the current status of cane toads, the funding and scientific/institutional situation in Western Australia and what the community could do. Local artists (amateur and professional) had donated works to be auctioned to raise funds for further work. The very first thought that struck me was the extent of community support for the Forum: not only in the range and numbers of people who attended (I would estimate that at least 250 people⁹ attended over the weekend and they ranged from farmers to environmentalists to the local Aboriginal community), but also in the amount of support from local government and a range of commercial operators including tourism, agriculture and mining. Many of these “non-scientists” attended both days.

The second thing that struck me was the degree of difference between the agendas of the scientific and the local community. There were two broad positions adopted by scientists: the “standard scientist” response was one of caution “not getting our hopes up too high” or waiting for data before proceeding. Their language was that of rationality and caution. Not all scientists believed that cane toads were a significant threat or could be stopped (for example, Tony Robinson from CSIRO and Ross Alford from James Cook University both appeared sceptical of cane toad effects and of control methods). Nevertheless evidence presented on behalf of ecologists Meri Oakwood and Amber Hooke clearly demonstrated the effect of cane toad toxicity on the northern quoll (“Local extinctions of northern quolls - the effect of cane toad invasion -- a paper presented on behalf of Meri Oakwood and Amber Hooke”, 2005; Original report: Oakwood, 2003) and



Figure 3.1.29 Prototype floating cane toad trap by Paul Sharpe, Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum, Kununurra, March 2005.

⁹ Total people in Kununurra on the night of the 2001 census = 5485 (includes residents and tourists) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002).



Figure 3.1.30 Detail from *Is there an alien hiding in your car?* poster of a monster toad (Department of Conservation and Land Management, January 2006b).

Figure 3.1.31 A toad in the hand.

Figure 3.1.32 Detail from *Is there an alien hiding in your car?* poster of a demonic toad (Department of Conservation and Land Management, January 2006b).



Figure 3.1.33 Potential routes of a cane toad exclusion fence as proposed by Paul Sharpe at the Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum, March 2005. This was largely abandoned as impractical although the idea of a plan of attack along a frontline is a prominent feature of the current campaign.



their subsequent local extinction in Kakadu National Park¹⁰. The second general reaction was by the “environmentalist scientists,” who were much more active in their position, arguing for actionable programmes, and increased funding, implying that something could be done in the future. At times some scientists held both these conflicting positions at the same time.

One could speculate that there were elements of paralysis, pragmatism and a precautionary attitude amongst all the scientists. The majority of scientists were concerned with collecting baseline data that could be used to document post-invasion impacts; toxicity testing to determine susceptible species; or relocating endangered animals to refugia. All these strategies accept that the cane toads are inevitable.

In contrast, the local community expressed a deep sense of urgency that something should be done **now** – *this 2005-2006 wet season*¹¹ -- and not any later, which will be too late. There were several references to the “Queensland Disease”¹² (i.e. a *nothing can be done* fatalism). Both the environmentalist scientists and locals used fighting language, with the weekend abounding in military metaphors. The chief example of this was Allan Thompson (2005) who (whilst working for CALM¹³) was speaking on behalf of the SEEKKS (Save Endangered East Kimberley Species) activist group. His presentation used battle strategy and tactics to set out a way that strategic trapping could stop

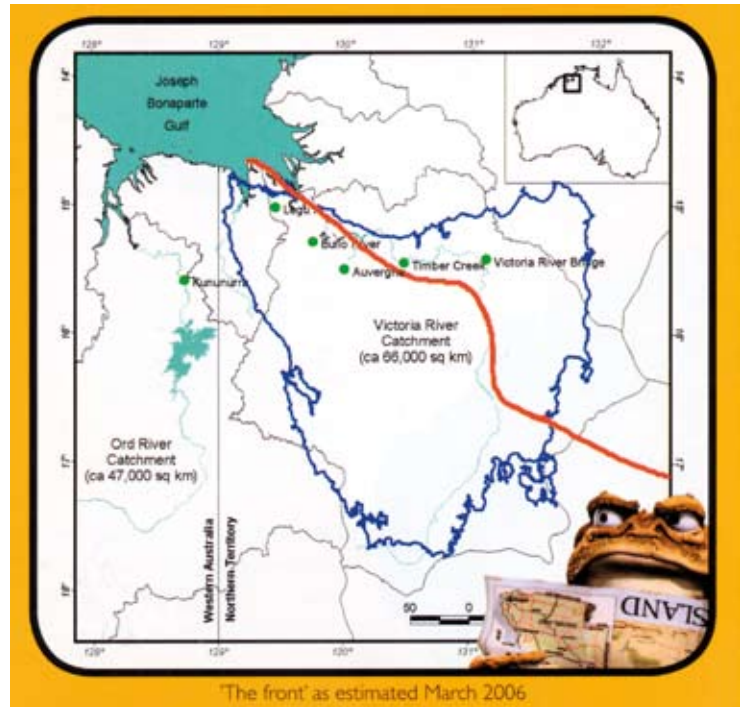
¹⁰ On 12 April 2005 “The biological effects, including lethal toxic ingestion, caused by Cane Toads (*Bufo marinus*)” was listed as a threatening process under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The only criteria under which listing was conclusively accepted was the effect on the northern quoll (see Threatened Species Scientific Committee, 2005). Much other data was rejected as being anecdotal, by lay people or unscientifically undertaken.

¹¹ By the time you read this cane toads may well have crossed the border into Western Australia.

¹² The cane toads were imported and released by an industry funded body. It is equally likely that nothing was done in Queensland because (a) effects on biodiversity were not observed or not considered important at the time (b) to do something about it was to legally and morally admit responsibility.

¹³ State government Department for Conservation and Land Management, now part of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Figure 3.1.34 Extent of cane toads as of March 2006, with Baz in right hand corner (Stop the Toad Foundation (Inc), 2006).



the advance of the toad. His aim was to deliberately (and forcefully) turn on its head the concept that humans were powerless to stop the cane toad and his rhetoric was backed up with news of the successes of trapping campaigns on the Northern Territory by NT Frogwatch (presented by frog conservationist Graham Sawyer 2005) which is the first time since 1935 that any control method has been successful.

The Forum was a cogent example of the positioning of an environmental problem and the evolving roles of scientists and locals. At times it seemed almost as if the scientists were more interested in making elegant before-after studies of the cane toad impact than halting any “invasion”, whereas the locals were more insistent (demanding!) on enacting practical measures that would stop the toads. It also seemed that the concern of the local community was for many a question of “threatening” the “unique” Kimberley lifestyle. Furthermore, my impression is that part of this “threat” is beyond language: amorphous, diaphanous and visceral. One of my strongest responses to the Forum was quite unexpected: for various reasons¹⁴ I really felt that I could no longer “belong” to the camp of the scientists (that my previous training may have lead me to assume). I am an ex-scientist.



Figure 3.1.35 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Sick goanna (unknown causes).

¹⁴ These include time since I was trained and the subsequent evolution of the field; practical experience of science and its relationship with profit-making enterprises; and a realisation that the profession as a whole undervalued belief systems or forms of knowing outside of itself.

Both days of the Forum were dominated by factual information about real effects that cane toads have had, and might have in the Kimberley. Beyond these real effects are questions of what the cane toad represents and more conjecturally how it acts as a “differential device” or a force that structures how we see ourselves. Australian Anthropologist and social theorist Adrian Franklin (2005, p. 7) argues “that animals allow humans to perform the feat of differentiation: to organise ourselves into different groups and to mark that difference. To maintain a sense of identity and difference we adopt animals to signify ‘us’ but also, of course, ‘them’.”



Figure 3.1.36 Northern Territory Chiropractor Paul Sharpe stands in front of his prototype cane toad fence (with Gordon Wyre (CALM) and Malcolm Douglas behind him), Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum, Kununurra, March 2005.

Clearly the intensity of language surrounding the cane toad (“rapacious” “noxious invader” “alarming” “prolific” “extinction in motion”) indicates that what it represents is strongly felt. Contrast the quoll, which is a furry, warm blooded, cuddly land animal, with the cane toad, which (when despised) is a slimy, warty, cold thing from the swamp. It is referred to as an extremely successful coloniser; its fecun-

Figure 3.1.37 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.



dity is freakish¹⁵. The cane toad's toxicity is complete in every stage of its existence. Negative associations of the cane toad see it as excessive: monstrous and plague-like¹⁶ and no doubt some of these associations are connected with the toad's European connection to witchcraft, transgression of boundaries and drug-taking (see Duerr, 1985).



Figure 3.1.38 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

At Ruby Billabong on the Daly River, Australian Geographic associate editor Ken Eastwood writes:

Burdekin ducks wander around the far shore and an azure kingfisher patiently watches the water nearby. Glancing down at the mud, I think the bank is moving. I look closer and see millions of tiny frogs on the hop. Picking one up, I have a sudden, sickening realisation these are not frogs: it's a plague of cane toads.

When we began planning this expedition, cane toads were still a future threat to the area. Now the introduced, poisonous pests are causing catastrophic damage.

Locals say snake numbers have dropped off since the cane toads arrived. Sean (Dr Sean Doody) says many goannas just vanish. "We had four years of numbers that were pretty similar every year and then – crash." (Eastwood, 2005, p. 70)

When cane toads colonise an area one can *observe* the physical concentration of biomass in the cane toad¹⁷ or the rapid collapse of predators¹⁸. But such an experience also potentially awakens our *cultural* fears of pestilence, catastrophic change, and of tidal waves of death. These metaphors are at the extreme end of the spectrum, but do bring to our attention how clearly cane toad representations are caught up in bodily responses



Figures 3.1.39 and 3.1.40. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. A series of photographs of one valley in the Saw Range

¹⁵ This is the wet season. "growth fetish" (Hamilton, 2003). A female cane toad can produce up to 70 000 eggs per year.

¹⁶ This brings up an interesting dilemma with any release of proposed cane toad viruses as biological control: the possibility of such a virus skipping over into native frogs or even into South East Asian toads and creating yet another plague.

¹⁷ Different life stages are seen (and heard).

¹⁸ Corpses can be smelt and counted.



Figures 3.1.41 and 3.1.42 Tobias Richardson, *Welcome*, 6 September to 22 October 2005, mixed media installation with detail of cane toads, Window Space, 24 Hour Art, Darwin. Richardson plays upon the space of a window gallery and the aesthetics of zoological display dioramas (complete with feeding times) to stage this ironic welcome for the toad.

and aesthetic judgements. There is fear, awe and terror (sublime) at the same time as there is the uncanny and grotesque.

3.1.5.2 *The Fall*

Linked to metaphors of plague is the common motif of “the Fall” in environmentalism. It is the idea derived from Judeo-Christian beliefs that we are living in a lapsed condition. For Australia this means searching for the condition before the fall – the wilderness (without *white* people) – an Eden -- that must be returned to. Guilt for the past goes hand in hand with fear of the future. The cane toads will destroy Eden¹⁹. This belief in the fall and the emotions of guilt and fear



¹⁹ Not only does this lead to despair but it can result in the public believing that problems can only be solved by cataclysmic change (Immerwahr, 1999).

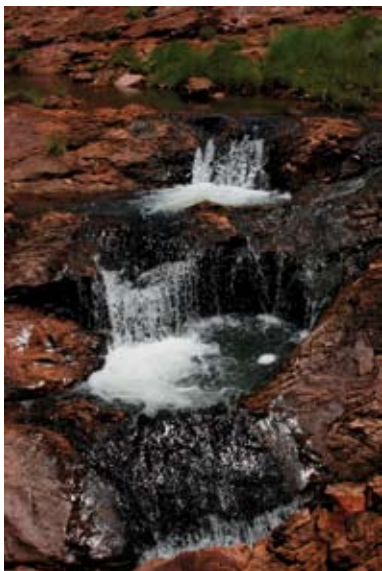


Figure 3.1.43 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006.*

held by the public are closely tied to ideas from a historical scientific ecology²⁰. Specific ideas from the history of ecology such as balanced ecosystems, successional tendencies towards an equilibrium²¹, and simple cause and effect mechanisms have considerable currency in today's society. Such "balanced" ecosystems envisaged are "right" – aesthetically graceful and morally correct. Holistic ideas from historical scientific ecology have been adopted in popular understanding.

By and large, the discourse of locals and scientists at the Forum followed the notions of this holistic historical ecology, and one reason why the cane toad issue had become so noteworthy is because the cane toad was made into (and made to fit into) the stereotype of a feral invader. However, I draw attention to when these orthodox views are challenged. I will now discuss five questions that were raised by the unfolding events.

3.1.5.3 What is the connection between cane toads and belonging?

I argue in this section that the concept of the feral is a key to understanding the connection between cane toads and belonging. As mentioned above, Franklin (2005) makes a clear connection between the identity of humans and how we divide up animals into categories. Commonly we divide introduced animals into domestic and feral depending upon their utilitarian relationship to us. In Franklin's schema he makes a further distinction between whether feral animals were originally wild or not. Cane toads are "introduced-wild" animals²²: animals that were introduced



Figure 3.1.44 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006.*

²⁰ Section 3.1.5.5.1 below discusses the ideas of contemporary scientific ecology.

²¹ I refer in particular here to the debate between holism versus reductionism in ecology, typified by the disagreement between American plant ecologists Frederick Clements and Henry Gleason in the early half of the 20th century. The Clementsian theory of ecological succession was influential up until the 1950s. It was founded upon the belief in a balance of nature and that ecosystems evolved towards steady state conditions. Clements proposed that the distribution and abundance of plants in an ecosystem worked towards an identifiable final climax state. He also proposed the terms vegetation associations, pioneer species, and dominant species. Gleason argued that the distribution of plants in nature was more influenced by the success of individual plants and therefore the make-up of any particular plant community was much more diverse and less structured than the vegetation associations of that Clements's succession theory allowed for (see also Barbour, 1995 and Kohler, 2002).

²² The four categories he proposes are native-wild, domestic-domestic, wild-domestic (feral cats, dogs, horses, cattle, camels, bees) and introduced-wild (cane toads, rabbits, foxes, trout).

but were never tame. He goes on to connect these divisions of animals directly to forces of nationalism and nation formation specific to Australia as a settler colony. One example is the acclimatisation societies of the late nineteenth century attempted to introduce European animals to make Australia more homely. A second example is the fashion to plant native (bush) gardens which has occurred at different times (notably since the 1970s).



Figure 3.1.45 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

Both these examples make a connection between plants and animals, nationalism and belonging²³. The latter example of the bush gardens is the same application of traditional ecological ideas that we saw at the Forum. Franklin goes as far as to describe the “mutually reinforcing symmetry between nationalism and ecology” as a social movement which he terms eco-nationalism (Franklin, 2005, p. 25). In other words the boundaries between humans and the nonhuman are strengthened in a definition of the feral and this reflects firm boundaries between the self and the Other. This kind of understanding is reflected in militaristic and pejorative language used in the cane toad debate and within invasion biology as a whole (For example see discussions in Larson, Nerlich, & Wallis, 2005; Simberloff, 2006). For local people, the idea that the cane toad invasion will be an attack upon their *lifestyle*, as people who *belong* in the Kimberley, is strongly held.

²³ In a way both are about restoring Eden.



Figures 3.1.46 to 3.1.48. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. A series of photographs of one valley in the Saw Range during the wet season.

Table 3.1 Some contemporary uses of the word feral

Feral	A person (possibly a hippy) in the environmental movement who lives in the forest areas and holds fairly radical ideas about environmentalism. Has been used to describe people who chain themselves to trees in logging protests.
Feral	Cool excellent unreal (positive value in youth subcultures)
Feral	My niece describes anything in really “bad taste” [aesthetics] like “a booga” (nasal discharge) as feral (i.e. negative value in youth subculture)
Feral ute	An Australian V8 utility car modified with numerous aerals, truck mud flaps, a bull bar, extra sound system, multiple spotlights and Bachelors’ and Spinster’ Ball stickers. Sometimes there is a Mac truck emblem on the front bonnet. This car is owned by young men in the country.
Feral Arts	A community cultural development organisation based in Brisbane whose aims are to build inclusive, sustainable and creative communities and to enhance cultural pluralism, social inclusion and locally managed, sustainable development http://www.feralarts.com.au/
Feral Future	Tim Low’s (1999) book on the history of invasive plant and animal in Australia

More recently the feral has been repositioned as a “space of change” and difference, a landscape of transformation (Robinson, 2005). This second kind of feral celebrates diversity and the breaking down of boundaries that the feral can do. Lesley Instone, for example, uses the metaphorical associations of the dingo (as a trickster, sheep killer, cowardly devil-dog, feral endangered, and re-domesticated animal²⁴) to refocus “attention on the transformative power of the encounter between humans and non-human” (Instone, 2004, p. 137)²⁵.

3.1.5.3.1 Feral Art

The work of artist Antony Hamilton directly addresses issues of ferality. It is characterised by small highly charged objects arranged in sparse installations. Composed of animal remains and outback domestic items, they are physical residues of mythic events. Muslin swaddling cloth, dingo hair, and a plastic pram apron are used in *Rock the Cradle* (1998, Figures 3.1.49 and 3.1.50, a reference to the Chamberlain case). In a much earlier work, *Miss or Myth?* (1992-1994, Figure 3.1.51), the installation was comprised of a bullet ridden 44-gallon drum, empty beer bottles, a battered waitress’s dress, a vehicle hood and kangaroo-skin miniskirt and bikini top (in the tradition of *One Million Years B.C.*). This work harks back to the 1971 hoax newspaper story of the Nullabor Nymph, a supposed feral child or wild girl that lived outside Eucla, the artwork in this case presenting “fabricated forensic evidence for an entirely imaginary event” (R. Smith, 2002, p. 16). A common theme in Hamilton’s work is the unsettling and possibly violent nature of narratives of the non-urban.

²⁴ See also *Dingo Makes Us Human* (Rose, 1992).

²⁵ ...but I find it really hard to do the same thing to a cane toad.



Figure 3.1.49 and 3.1.50. Antony Hamilton *Rock the Cradle, with detail, 1998* (image from **Seva Frangos Art**). Irregular oval form, 93) x 106 cm. Muslin swaddling cloth, dingo hair, plastic pram apron. Hamilton's art objects have a characteristic Beuysian/fetishistic intensity.

Figure 3.1.51 Antony Hamilton, Miss or Myth? Near-Eucla element (old forty-four gallon drum, surface water), *Diamond Ice element* (kangaroo shooter's ruined vehicle hood, beer bottles, natural light beam). "Spirit of the plain" element (found dress [December 1993], attached portion of printed newsprint, old phone number on reverse, from pocket. Kangaroo doe skin, tanned with *Eremophila longifolia* leaves and sewn with kangaroo tail sinew and human hair. Piece of kangaroo buck skin, tanned with *Eremophila longifolia* leaves), 1992-1994, Beltana, South Australia, 250 x 400 x 400 cm (Thomas, 1999, p. 19).

3.1.5.3.2 Cane Toads–R-Us

The classic offbeat documentary *Cane Toads: An unnatural history* (Lewis, 1987) and the more recent *Cane-Toad: What happened to Baz?* (Clayton & Silke, 2002 downloadable at <http://www.cane-toad.com/>)²⁶ are other examples of the feral in art and popular culture. At its release the former was seen as an adventurous transgression of the

Figure 3.1.52 Help us fight an alien invasion: Protecting WA from cane toads, (Department of Conservation and Land Management, January 2006a).



Figure 3.1.53 Stop the Toad Brochure cover featuring Daz (Stop the Toad Foundation (Inc), March 2006).

²⁶ (first lines)

Daz: [farts] Oh, excuse me! Uh, G'day! Eh, go on. Uh, my name's Daz, but me mates call me Dazza. I'm just here to talk about me little mate, uh, Baz, actually, cause, pickle me grandma, the silly old bugger's gone bloody missing!

Daz: Well, Baz just vanished, like a... fart in a fan factory, you know? And I'm a little pissed off about it, seein' as how the bloke still owes me a six-pack!

[chuckles]

Daz: But yeah, no one knows what happened to the little baz-tard.

boundaries of the natural history documentary genre with its interviews of cane toad lovers and loathers and in its use of an ironic Australian humour. Clayton and Silke's animation also shares a similar sense of humour – if a shade blacker. The plot revolves around Daz, a talking cane toad (sitting in a dog bowl) narrating different scenarios that might explain the disappearance of another cane toad, Baz. Daz and Baz are ordinary Aussie blokes and much of the humour revolves around their personification of all things ocker. In particular it is the interplay between their humanness and Baz's multiple (and sometimes bloody) possible demises *at the hands of humans* that makes the artwork a “feral space²⁷”. In other words we brought cane toads to Australia and turned them *from* pest eradicators *into* feral pests and at the same time we (as Euro-Australians) have invaded Australia *like cane toads*²⁸. We share the same characteristics of highly successful invasive species²⁹: the Cane Toads-R-Us. Furthermore, the personification of Baz and Daz remind us *by inversion* that we should not be blaming the cane toads for doing what they do “naturally” since it was we who brought them here in the first place. This is something that was alluded to at the Forum and at subsequent cane toad campaign meetings whenever the issue of humane killing and disposal of cane toads was raised. In sum, the common thread in these feral animal artworks is not just the use of animals and animal metaphors, but the role that the objects/metaphors play in the formulation of the concept of belonging (and not belonging) in Australia.

3.1.5.4 Why do some people in a society care about the effects of cane toads whilst other people in a society don't?

This second question is really about what makes some people care about the environment whereas other people do not find it an important factor in their lives. Of course I do not expect to be able to irrefutably answer such a knotty question in this Exegesis (or even in my art) but there were two things that struck me about what I saw at the Forum. Firstly for members of the Kimberley public it was not just a question of ecology or economics but of lifestyle choices – about a perceived threat to living in the Kimberley. Secondly many of the responses to cane toads (mine included) were visceral. What is the significance of these observations?



Figure 3.1.54 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Not a cane toad.

²⁷ Note: Whatmore and Hinchliffe (2003) define feral spaces specifically as spaces of nature in the urban environment. In this exegesis I am just using the term to refer to transgressive spaces in general.

²⁸ We are the natural alien of Neil Evernden's book, *The natural alien: Humankind and environment* (1985).

²⁹ For example we have great competitive abilities, we are highly mobile, tolerant of a broad range of environmental conditions, have high “phenotypic plasticity” (in our case cultural flexibility), and we modify habitats to make them more favourable to our own growth and reproduction. According to Evernden (1985, p. 109) “with every technological change he [we humans] instantly mutates into a new – and for the ecosystem an exotic – kind of creature.” This is the natural alien.



Figures 3.1.55 to 3.1.58. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. A series of photographs of one valley in the Saw Range during the wet season.

Anthropologist Kay Milton (2002) argues that our perception of the world is shaped by direct experience in which emotion plays a central role. She also maintains that the idea of the separation of emotion and rationality in western culture – and particularly the cleaving of emotion from science – is a myth unsupported by available evidence.

Echoing both Milton and Franklin, Australian anthropologists Trigger and Mulcock (2005, pp. 1308-1309) assert that people who care about nature do so because of certain experiences that they have in their formative years and because of “their consequent familiarity with particular natural and cultural landscapes, and their senses of what forms of nature are commensurate with notions of Australian national and regional identities”. Milton (2002) further contends that it is in the interest of market forces to exclude the acknowledgement of emotion from public debates about environmental issues. At no time were *irrational* or emotionally bound arguments directly addressed at the Forum even though they were tangibly present. Even when the effects of cane toads on Aboriginal communities were raised, arguments were couched in terms of the effect on popular bush tucker species and not on spiritual matters.

3.1.5.5 How do we cope with hybridity?: Situations full of uncertainties and with imperfect answers?

3.1.5.5.1 The new ecology

I have already demonstrated how at the Forum the general public echoed the values such as balance and equilibrium of traditional scientific ecology. However the second case of the feral as a “space of change” has links with what (in the last 15 years) has been termed the *new ecology*³⁰:

Gone is the overriding concern with equilibrium systems, climax communities, and simple deterministic models. In its place is an ecosystems ecology that views ecosystems as complex adaptive systems that possess intriguing structural qualities, such as resilience, hierarchy, scale, nesting, dissipative structures, and autocatalytic design, and descriptors of dynamics, such as nonlinearity, irreversibility, self-organization, emergence, development, directionality, history, co-evolution, surprise, indeterminism, pulsing, and chaotic dynamics (Abel & Stepp, 2003).

I will summarise the new ecology here and I will discuss it again briefly in Section 3.2.6.3. The fundamental difference between new and old ecologies is how change in ecosystems is understood. New ecology arose as a consequence of the realisation of the complexity of ecosystems and the subsequent application of chaos science in ecological modelling. Change and disturbance are now seen as continuing and often largely irreversible processes. Ecology has had to shift its focus to understanding that complexity will always be present and must be accounted for. There is a recognition of nature as a chaotic system. Populations fluctuate in response to both regular and also less predictable circumstances. Environmental decisions need to be framed in terms of relative risks and not certainties. Risk in turn is a sum of the probability of an event occurring and the level of effect that it causes. Despite the difficulties the challenge of science is to quantify risks. “Science must go on predicting and doing all of the other things that societies rely on science to do, while admitting scientific models, explanations and predictions are oversimplified views of nature” (Lindquist, 2004, p. 51).



Figures 3.1.59 and 3.1.60. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Merton Photopoint December 2004 and February 2006.

30

See for example Botkin, 1990; Lash, Szerszynski, & Wynne, 1996.

In Australia, biologist Tim Low's book *The new nature* (2002) provides numerous examples of how plants and animals have taken advantage of the ecosystems provided by humans. New nature is everywhere (e.g., Low's Part I, *Nature and Us*). When humans cause disturbance there are winners as well as losers (e.g., chapter 5, *The Ecology of Sewage – Wildlife Wants our Wastes*). Maximum biodiversity is to be encouraged no matter where it is (e.g., chapter 2, *Endangered Weeds – Rarities Lurk Among Us*). Native animals can cause degradation (e.g., Part III, *Conflicts*). He describes how we need a new kind of ecologist: we need scientists to study the animals and the ecosystems they inhabit with the idea of chaos in mind. His argument is not that there is complete chaos: there is structure to nature, but it is not formalized, nor is it constant.

It is not surprising that in the humanities, the concepts of new ecology have been paralleled³¹ by those philosophers and theorists (for example, Deleuze and Guattari) who envisage a messy, open and uncertain world; and who celebrate a parallel world of human diversity. As we are already living in a hybrid world, part of the answer to my question might be that we already know how to cope with hybridity.

However another line of questioning that dogs ecological research is to what extent can findings in one ecosystem be applied to others. Can small-scale observations be applied to much larger systems? Can general laws be extracted from ecosystems in the same way that they can be in chemistry and Newtonian physics? The answer of course is that very *general* generalisations can be but, if ecosystems are really that complicated, then it may be that a suite of factors, played out in a series of events over time, lead to a certain situation and these may be only applicable to those same series of factors and events of that single ecosystem.

Furthermore, what happens if ferality leads not to diversity but to homogenisation? Whilst Low lauds the winners of "new nature" he could be accused of ignoring the losers. After the fixed boundaries of Franklin's eco-nationalism and the loose boundaries of a more celebratory feral, there is a third feral possibility. Invasive species can and do swamp ecosystems leading to the concentration of biomass in one species, the simplification of ecosystem structure and overall biotic homogenisation. The rapidity with which this happens also affects the ability of other organisms to cope with new species. Invasion meltdown is a ecological term with popular currency referring to the "compounded interactions of each successive and successful wave of alien species benefiting from the previous introduction of the other" (Wissink, 2000, p. 1). Although data supporting the concept is still patchy (Simberloff, 2006), it might be better to consider the cane toad invasion into the Kimberley in a wider ecological framework. Changing fire patterns, for example, are less visible forms of disturbance that also act on ecosystems and arguably have contributed just as significantly to mammal extinctions. Nevertheless the idea of the feral sits at the nexus of scientific ecology and cultural theory and provides an exciting area for potential artworks. But when we talk about the feral in art we should be more careful with what we might mean.

31 Or osmotically absorbed into or absorbed back out of?

3.1.5.6 How do we decide to value some things more than others?

Yet again this is something of an oversized philosophical query. In the case of the cane toad, we value a northern quoll more than we value a cane toad. Or more accurately, we discourage the extinction of species, as high biodiversity³² is greatly valued; moreover, we value native species over introduced species. Alternatively, should we devalue the “losers” as morally unworthy? More generally can a condition of a more relativist celebratory feral diminish into giving up responsibility for current actions and for previous actions and accountabilities? Even if we don’t blame the cane toad we must surely still take action. Environmental theorist Neil Evernden (1985, p. 4) defines an environmentalist as “one who experiences a sense of value in nature and is moved to assert the reality of his [sic] experience to others.”



Figure 3.1.61 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. A series of photographs of one valley in the Saw Range during the wet season.

3.1.5.7 What is the position of science in my work now that I am not a scientist?

One thing that hasn’t changed is that I still use the methods of field science in my work. I still value scientific fieldwork as a process of engagement and as a structure of investigation. However the Forum also refocused my attention on the role of ecological facts in environmental art. There is a type of environmental art that relies very heavily upon conveying the facts of an environmental problem and to making sure the message gets across to an audience. This type of environmental art often contradictorily relies upon



Figure 3.1.62 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

scientific facts (from ecology) as a form of justification at the same time as it holds onto the outmoded concepts of a traditional ecology such as the balance of nature. My concern is also that such artworks supply us with the answers to questions without any room to manoeuvre. In the worst case they become didactic and lack a sense of poetics. This type of environmental art is neither imaginative nor evocative and it lacks any richness of metaphor³³.

³² Delving into the idea of biodiversity is another tangent that I will not be exploring!

³³ Two brief examples: Californian environmental artist Ruth Wallen produced didactic panels about environmental issues (see Figure 3.1.63). In the *Ecologies* exhibition American artist Peter Fend proposed giant land art inspired earthworks to solve China’s water problems (see Figures 3.1.65 and 3.1.66). These heavy and coarsely made plaster models were displayed in the gallery on a dark peaty soil platform accompanied by topographic maps of China displayed on the wall nearby.

Figure 3.1.63 Ruth Wallen *Children's Forest Trail*, San Bernardino National Forest, 1995 (Wallen, 2003, p. 181). The first of five 22 x 36-in permanent trail markers. Each panel consists of digitally composed composites of drawings and stories generated from workshops the artist conducted with local youth.

There is a direct link between environmental art that uses facts as proof of its rightness (and righteousness) and environmentalists that rely exclusively upon scientific facts to prove their arguments. Evernden, for example, strongly believes that a primary cause of the environmental crisis was the substitution of animated life by neutral matter and the reduction of the ways that things can be valued to those that are purely economic. For him the problem with science is its “resourcism”, the turning of things into resources, into subject-object relationships inseparable from the scientific process and into user-used relationship reflecting its close association with capitalism. In a similar distinction to Milton, he sees science as removing “emotion impediments to unrestrained manipulation” (Evernden, 1985, p. 22). Evernden gives the example of how beauty is reduced to a resource. Our search is for “which place is beautiful?” and not “why is this particular place beautiful?” “Rather than an experience or a way of perceiving the world, aesthetics becomes a collector’s search for special things. As things, landscape can be measured and managed, created and destroyed, traded off against other objects and uses” (Evernden, 1985, p. 24). At worst if it can’t be measured at all in terms of being a resource then such a value, or such a way of seeing the world, or such an *un-economic* object, doesn’t even exist.



Figure 3.1.64 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. A series of photographs of one valley in the Saw Range during the wet season.

In *The natural alien: Humankind and environment* Evernden passionately argues that one shouldn't use the same language of your "enemy"³⁴. "In seizing the arguments that would sound persuasive even to indifferent observers environmentalists have come to adopt the strategy and assumptions of their opponents" (Evernden, 1985, p. 10). For him the problem of environmentalism is that of continually promoting a utilitarian value to nature: a value that can only be quantified economically. The danger is the numbers of science replace other values that are actually the issue at hand. At the heart of this matter is the kind of relationship that we have with the world.

Figure 3.1.65 Peter Fend *China Basin*
Plans: The River Dragon Breathes Fire,
installation, 2000, Ecologies Exhibi-
tion (S. Smith, 2001, pp. 16-17).

In a parallel field but with a slightly different argument, Australian cultural studies academic Emily Potter (2005) critiques the view that environmental literature must contain obvious ethical commitment to environmental issues. Typically such literature is "identified by its overt thematic and dystopic poetics which function to contrast the present with the past" (2005) – a fall from an Edenic state. She argues that such literature that refers explicitly and metonymically to green perspectives runs the risk of failing to engage us in change. She contends that this is because it is anthropocentric; it silences the nonhuman, flattening the life world, and often isolates one element of a system from the web of life. This literature works by "objectively reflecting back our awful and ugly truths" via a "paradigm of loss and redemption" (2005). Potter contrasts their metonymical strategies with a more open poetic of metaphor through Janet Turner Hospital's *Due Preparations for the Plague* (2003). Ostensibly about a plane hijacking, Potter argues that Hospital presents a world of complexity, working "*with* mess rather than against it," and represents infection not negatively, but as an "ecological disposition for transformation" (2005), working beyond an economy of damage and redemption.

To clarify my position, firstly, my attraction to field science may be because I look upon it as more natural history than management science.

Figure 3.1.66 Peter Fend *China Basin*
Plans: The River Dragon Breathes Fire,
2000, Ecologies Exhibition (S. Smith,
2001, pp. 16-17). Detail of one model.

34 It's like allowing your enemy to choose your weapons and your battleground.

if natural history promotes an understanding of the world, it is in the same sense that we understand another person. We recognise this or that behaviour as typical of a particular individual and, perhaps, we feel that, in his place, we might behave or think in the same way. But we do not necessarily control or predict what he will do. To a scientist understanding implies prediction, whereas the understanding of a naturalist is an empathy with nature or some part of nature (Evernden, 1985, p. 20, quoting Peters, 1979, p. 192).

It may be naive to think that a natural history can be separated from quantitative ecology but I am just as much interested in an appreciative and personal, as in a predictive and managing, relationship with the world. Secondly, if you are going to engage in “real” science, one should do so with a generous criticality. If one doesn’t blame cane toads then one should not blame the scientists either. The second aspect of my interest in science is to focus back on the scientists themselves: to partake in a discussion with them and value what they do as humans. One could contend that many artists *use* the technology and visualising tools of science to provide knowledge or ways or materials to make art. But not as many artists seemingly *engage with what field science does*, what metaphors it works with and where its future direction lies.

3.1.6 Waiting for cane toads

Without a dangerous foreigner, there can be no nation (Goulish, 2000, p. 105).

Of all the things that one can do, waiting is the worst strategy to adopt. Waiting for the scientific facts of cane toads causing ecosystem changes wasted many years where significant research could have been done on prevention methods. Waiting for proof of climate change is no different. As its name suggests, the Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis’s³⁵ poem, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1904) describes an empire waiting for the arrival of barbarians. The senators have stayed at home, the orators have stayed away but the emperor and officials in their glittering grandeur are waiting for them to arrive. But by night everyone has gone home because the barbarians did not arrive. And in fact, there are no barbarians. The poem ends:

And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?

Those people were some kind of solution.

South African novelist J M Coetzee derived his novel of the same name (1997, first published 1980) from the scenario in Kavafis’s poem. It is set in an anonymous frontier town with the three central characters being Colonel Joll (the torturer), the Barbarian Woman (blinded by Joll), and the narrator, the Magistrate. Colonel Joll and his troops are searching for barbarians. They prove difficult to track down. He returns with the Barbarian Woman with the idea of gaining information from her. The Magistrate rescues the Barbarian Woman and tries to get to know her. He goes out to return the Barbarian Woman and on his return he is arrested and tortured. When the troops go out to fight the barbarians they have melted away. Colonel Joll leaves as his role has evaporated. The Magistrate is

35 Anglicised as Constantine P. Cavafy.

reinstated and at the end of the novel remains in the fortress of the anonymous frontier town without any barbarians. In the context of South Africa the novel can be seen as an allegorical investigation of the position of liberal elements in a society. But the Magistrate is infatuated not necessarily with the girl herself but “with the oppression she has suffered, she represents the captive native upon whom the magistrate is able to project his colonial gaze” (Hamadeh, 2005). The fear of the Other, the barbarian, justifies the violence made in the name of the State. We who created the barbarian are actually the most barbaric. The Magistrate can neither justify the position of the Barbarian Woman without destroying his empire, nor can he accept his own identification with the Barbarian Woman without destroying himself. He is thus just as complicit with the empire as the violent Colonel Joll. Coetzee seems to be suggesting that one should work to break down the category of barbarian and to dissipate the empire.



Figures 3.1.67 and 3.1.68. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Wild sorghum ligule (wet season).

I draw parallels between the exhaustion of being complicit explored in Coetzee’s novel with the limits of my previous career as an environmental scientist. Furthermore, are there similarities that can be drawn with the cane toad invasion? Like the poem and novel, the cane toad is our barbarian as we are also the barbarians. We have put the cane toad into a category. There is no Magistrate keeping cane toads in the Fortress, but there are scientists³⁶ with a similarly ambiguous position. But unlike the poem and novel the *material* effects of the cane toad will not melt away. The goannas



Figures 3.1.69 and 3.1.70. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Crossing Photopoint July 2004 and February 2006.

36 And I guess all of us.

that I photographed in *the walkingcountry* during **fieldwork/fieldwalking** will die³⁷. The way to break down the empire might be by expanding the repertoire of the ways in which we value things, and perhaps expand the debate about environmental issues in the Kimberley in general. The Forum showed me that local people were doing things and were not just the passive receptors of cane toad representations. They are certainly serious about what they do. As of March 2006, 6000 cane toads have been killed in the Victoria River area

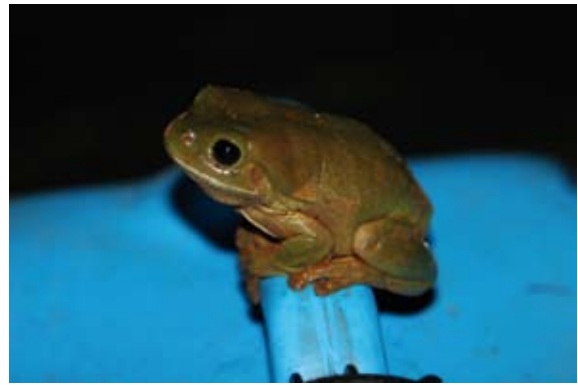


Figure 3.1.71 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Tree frog at Camp 51.

of the Northern Territory by CALM employees and Kimberley Toad Busters (Department of Conservation and Land Management, 2006c). What happens if the cane toad invasion cannot be stopped or contained? Every few weeks there is a new report in *The West Australian* about cane toad advances. Are symbolic victories possible or will the pain of failure ultimately be more destructive?

3.1.7 Conclusion

There are few specific examples of how the elements of this first section of the Exegesis are made visual in my art. I had concluded that making art featuring the actual cane toad was too negative. And the questions raised in this first section are bigger than specific artworks. But the non-art context (of Kimberley ecology, Kimberley experience and cane toads) surrounding the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project has influenced the overall direction of the artworks: you should look out for consideration of ecological processes, for rhythm of the landscape and for meditations about emotional attachment to place. Through the Kununurra 2005 Community Cane Toad Forum concrete examples of the tensions of seeking and denying belonging in non-urban Australian have been brought to our attention. I also conclude here that the way forward for environmental art lies in neither neglecting science nor relying wholly upon it for justification.

Figure 3.1.72 *Caution feral humans next 200 years: an Australian bicentennial cartoon by Chips Mackinolty, (circa 1988) reproduced in Cooke (1988, p. 7).*

³⁷ Humans populations too will increase in the world. Every day I watch the world population counter that I have on my computer dashboard tick over.

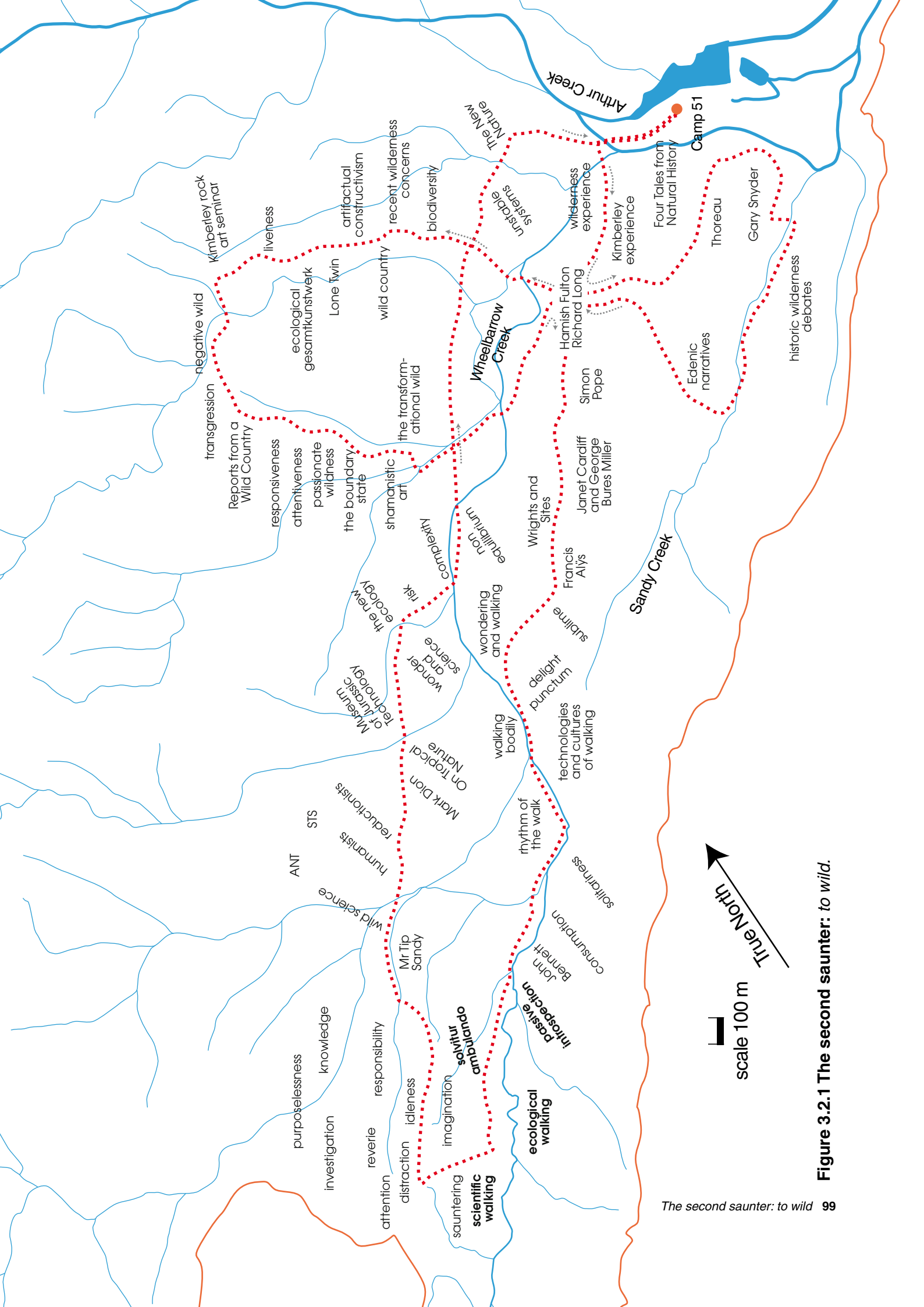


Figure 3.2.1 The second saunter: to wild.

3.2 To wild

Section 3.2 sets out to examine the idea of the wild as it applies to the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project. The aim is to expand upon the different meanings of wild in nature and human nature, art and science. Issues covered include moving beyond last century's reliance on wilderness; wildness as rule breaking and transgression; the importance of the real stuff of wild places to experience ecological processes; the sublime and other models of appreciating wildness.

The Section begins with evidence of the importance of the idea of wilderness in the Kimberley and to the non-urban art walkers, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. Then the idea of a wild artwork as something performed, alive and multidimensional is proposed as a contrast to the wilderness model. The majority of the works by Long and Fulton rely upon the aesthetic of the sublime. As a contrast, it is proposed that the creation of new non-urban walking might be better derived from wonder.

In the fieldwork-themed artworks of Mark Dion, the relationship between wildness and science is raised. At first glance, a wild way of doing things would seem antithetical to the method of science. This is probably true for the institutional structure of science and as it is generally practised. But I argue that strategies of wildness are still useful. John Bennett proposes a schema of different types of walking that is a continuum from passive introspection to scientific (knowledge) walking. Such a schema is useful in interpreting the artwork in the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project.

3.2.1 Four Tales from Natural History

There are more than just human “voices” speaking in the sound installation *Four Tales from Natural History* that I exhibited at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art in 2004. The viewer walking into the Tower Gallery was greeted with four highly polished wooden lecterns arranged around a pool of light in the middle of the room. Each of the lecterns emitted sounds that could be heard if one held one's head close to the sloping tops of the lecterns. The sounds related loosely to the Ancient Greek classification of matter into human, mineral, animal and vegetable classes. The first lectern emitted a recorded conversation with ecologist Thalie Partridge, a PhD student, discussing her small mammal trapping project at Purnululu National Park in the Kimberley. On either side other lecterns emitted the accelerated recordings of earthquakes and the gurgling vocalisations of Torresian Crows making their close-contact calls at *the walkingcountry*. The final lectern invoked the suburbs through a soundtrack where two women went about choosing plants at the local nursery.



Figure 3.2.2 *Four Tales from Natural History* (2004) sound installation at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art.



Figure 3.2.3 *Four Tales from Natural History* (2004) sound installation at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art.



Figure 3.2.4 *Four Tales from Natural History* (2004) sound installation at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. Detail of lectern surfaces with sound source coming from underneath.

Some of my aims with this artwork were to investigate the *ordinary* nature of scientific fieldwork, the possibility of conveying messages from entities other than humans, and the place and agency of a viewer and the artwork in installation art. It was my intention that the lecterns were highly polished and seductively tactile. I wanted people to caress their surfaces as they leant forward to hear the sounds. The lecterns were positioned facing each other, but subtly irregularly aligned. I wished to dually evoke the associations of the lectern as a signifier of science/authority as well as its status as a natural material – as wood/tree - by the use of physical touch. The lecterns connoted a specific relationship between audience and the person speaking at the lectern. Yet in this case this relationship was unsettled. The audience could walk right up close to a lectern (which usually occupies formally demarcated space) and touch it, and the sounds emitted were multiple, layered, and from differing sources. There were no scripts for you to read from the lecterns as the art objects were already speaking outwards into the world. The viewer was placed in a position of control or authority at the same time as they were displaced to let others speak.

Whilst the overall format of the installation was fairly controlled, my intention was to investigate notions of the wild. In this case there were very literal connections as the sound track of the ecologist was recorded in a wilderness area. There are other less obvious aspects, such as the tactile nature of the lecterns or the sound of rocks, which may possibly allude to a more corporeal kind of artwork – something that might also be considered wild. Section 3.2 sets out to further tease out what the wild might mean in my practice. How does wildness affect me as a person and as an artist? In what ways is it

possible to make art that “lives” wildness? And how is this wildness received by and/or transferred to/ transformed by the viewer or audience?

3.2.2 Wilderness

To be able to answer these questions it is essential to clarify which aspects of wildness are relevant. The Kimberley area, where *the walkingcountry* is situated is regularly portrayed as wilderness. Tourism promoters frequently offer “wilderness experiences” (see Figure 3.2.6). As seen in Section 3.1 the fieldwork that scientists do is also influenced by the way that the Kimberley environment is viewed. What is the connection between wilderness and wildness? I begin by briefly outlining the idea of wilderness before considering the wild in the human.

3.2.2.1 Walking and the wilderness landscape

Two of the most well known art walkers of non-urban areas are Hamish Fulton and Richard Long. Their art consists of walks in the landscape that are documented and subsequently shown in some visual form (as photographs or wall text) in a gallery setting: the walk is the primary art object and is both the direct source of, and predates, any art gallery expression. Fulton clearly states his position thus:

only art resulting from the experience of individual walks.

only = not a generalised response to nature.

art resulting from = first the walk second the artwork.

the experience of = a walk must be experienced and cannot be imagined.

individual walks = each walk has a beginning and an end

(A. Wilson, 2002, p. 21 from Fulton’s words of 2000).

As such their work comes out of the conceptual dematerialisation of the art object in the late sixties and early seventies.



Figure 3.2.5 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006. The bridesmaid’s dress* July 2004 to February 2005.

Both Fulton and Long do the majority of their walks in wilderness areas. Fulton’s selection of readings in his Tate Gallery retrospective exhibition catalogue also demonstrate a considerable interest in and influence from wilderness authors such as Henry David Thoreau, Gary Snyder, John Muir and Roderick Nash (Fulton, 2002). Their art relies upon photographs, which almost exclusively show the landscape empty of other people. On the surface such pictures amply demonstrate the influence of the wilderness concept on their art.




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Figure 3.2.6 Gibb River Road accommodation (Australia's North West Tourism, 2004). Note language used to describe the Kimberley.

Figure 3.2.7 Richard Long *A line in the Himalayas, 1975 (Long, 1991, p. 62).*

Figure 3.2.8 Richard Long *A southward walk of 200 Miles in 14 days across the middle of Iceland, 1994 (Long, 2002, p. 91).*

Figure 3.2.9 Richard Long *The high plains. A straight hundred mile walk on the Canadian Prairie, 1974 (Long, 1991, p. 10).*

3.2.2.2 Historical wilderness debates

In the last forty years the concept of wilderness has been central to the environmental movement. Its much longer historical antecedents have been thoroughly charted (see Glacken, 1967; R. Nash, 2001; Oelschlaeger, 1991). The concept of wilderness has been used extensively in environmental campaigns in areas of Australia including the Kimberley. In a wider context, lamentation for the so-called death of wilderness in the 1990s (see *The End of Nature*, McKibben, 1990) was a result of the rise of a constructivist position which saw wilderness as an entirely cultural concept without any physical reality. Two influential papers, William Cronon's *The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature* (Cronon, 1995) and J Baird Callicott's *The Wilderness Idea Revisited: The Sustainable Development Alternative* (Callicott, 1991), which critiqued the status quo, were in turn subjected to sustained criticism by other environmentalists. Some critics believed the constructivists had merely perpetuated the Cartesian split between mind and body, human and nature to create a world of "human solipsism" (Shepard, 1995). Deep Ecologist George Sessions believed that it was the underlying anthropomorphism of humanism that was the problem and that the result had been, on the one hand, a right wing with a mandate to carry on *business as usual* policy and, on the other hand, a left wing that had co-opted environmentalism into a social justice agenda (Sessions, 1996).

These theoretical arguments of the 1990s were shadowed in the practice of environmental management where opinions were raised as to whether (if it was merely a cultural construct) there was any objective, empirical or scientific basis for the existence of wilderness areas. Further criticisms included: whether wilderness areas were concentrated on spectacular iconic areas at the expense of smaller or more threatened ecosystems; was there a fundamental limit to what could be reserved as wilderness; and a criticism that management needed to continue outside of conservation areas (Mackey, Lesslie, Lindenmayer, Nix, & Incoll, 1998). Whatever the original intentions of the constructivist, the outcomes did include destabilising the environmental arguments that depended upon a pure and untouched nature (Instone, 2004). But Cronon's main argument was not that wilderness areas did not exist, but that the word represented a certain set of human values that perpetuated a human/nature binary and thus supported the continuing destruction of nature by not having us care for the nature close by us. Ecologist Tim Low (2002, p. 48) states "We define it by what it is not, then imbue it with values considered wanting in our cities: purity, innocence and goodness."

There was a danger in seeing wilderness as fixed and preserved in time. Cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove (1984) had connected the power of the eye overseeing the landscape to exploitation and domination. Others in turn argued that the radically anti-anthropomorphic position of Deep Ecologists ignored people in Third and Fourth World countries (Guha, 1989) and was itself an impossible Edenic narrative of The Fall (see Section 3.1.5.2 and see also Slater, 1995). Literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt (1992) had pointed out the connection between supposedly empty (or more accurately *emptied*) landscapes and European imperial expansion. The concept of wilderness, as it was defined in the 1990s, bypassed the role of Aboriginal Australians in shaping our country or framed them as items of nature, when in fact there hasn't been a place fully empty of people in Australia for at least forty to fifty thousand years (Bowler, Johnston, Olley, Prescott, & al., 2003; O'Connell & Allen, 2004; Turney et al., 2001).

Returning to the photographs of Fulton and Long, the very pictures that were received as affirmations of the value of the landscapes photographed, were caught up in these wider wilderness debates. In my opinion the impact that the photographs had when they were first shown as by-products of the walking event has receded, and in retrospect they now read somewhat closer to, for example, genres of wilderness sublime paintings or commercially successful landscape photography. This is not the fault of the artists, but it would seem that their *role* has been lessened and the concept of the walk has been displaced. The images captured appear timeless. The walker is invisible. The nonhuman content is aestheticised as landscape – a process that is overpowering because of the power of the photographic medium as a theoretical and literal frame for reading -- and reinforced by being in many cases the only object in the gallery. Although the artists may have been attached to the landscape, and may have sincerely believed in a physical nature, the viewer remains detached.

Figures 3.2.10 and 3.2.11. The way Hamish Fulton's photographs are framed in the gallery.

Figure 3.2.12 Early exhibition of Hamish Fulton's works at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 1985 (Fulton, 2002, p. 120).

3.2.2.3 Recent wilderness concerns

First sustainable development and now biodiversity have superseded wilderness as the central motif in environmental conservation. In its application (and despite its original definition) biodiversity tends not to be ecosystem-based but species-based. Callicott (1991) had argued that wilderness areas contributed little to the preservation of rare and threatened species since most threatened species were found outside of them. But this is *because* wilderness areas have the majority of their evolutionary and biodiversity processes intact and are not actually degraded – they are good at their “job”¹. Outside of wilderness areas, biodiversity must place emphasis on other land types and corridors between reserve areas if it is to make a difference – making the best (“use”) of the rest (Mackey, Lesslie, Lindenmayer, Nix, & Incoll, 1998).

So current practical understanding seems to be that wilderness areas are still important to biodiversity *when linked with* conservation activities in land use types other than nature reserves and national parks. Wilderness areas cannot be left alone and need our intervention. Low states, “We are imprisoned by a paradox. Wilderness is supposed to be the one environment we let alone and don’t manipulate. But manipulate we must. We need to set fires and quell weeds and evict feral animals. Doing nothing destroys wilderness” (Low, 2002, pp. 43-44)². Wilderness areas have the advantage of greater levels of ecosystem integrity – something that cannot be achieved in small fragmented reserves – and they are more likely to cope with global climatic change. Nevertheless there has been a pragmatic separation of wilderness areas from the wilderness idea, and a political retreat from the word (e.g. the National Wilderness Inventory has been

¹ There are some exceptions to this rule, for example mammal extinctions in Australia. See Appendix A.7 for further details.

² Wilderness management itself even when it purports to do nothing (to interfere) is still predicated on a firm boundary between nature and culture. “It is assumed that the wild can be adequately characterised by the existence of an authentic, undomesticated, untamed state” (Suchet, 2002, p. 146).

renamed the Australian Land Disturbance Database, Department of Environment and Heritage, undated). In conservation management there has been a move away from precise definitions of wilderness and a shift to wilderness *qualities* that can be measured on a continuum (e.g. Mackey, Lesslie, Lindenmayer, Nix, & Incoll, 1998). Such qualities can be mathematically calculated and mapped in a GIS (Lesslie & Taylor, 1985).

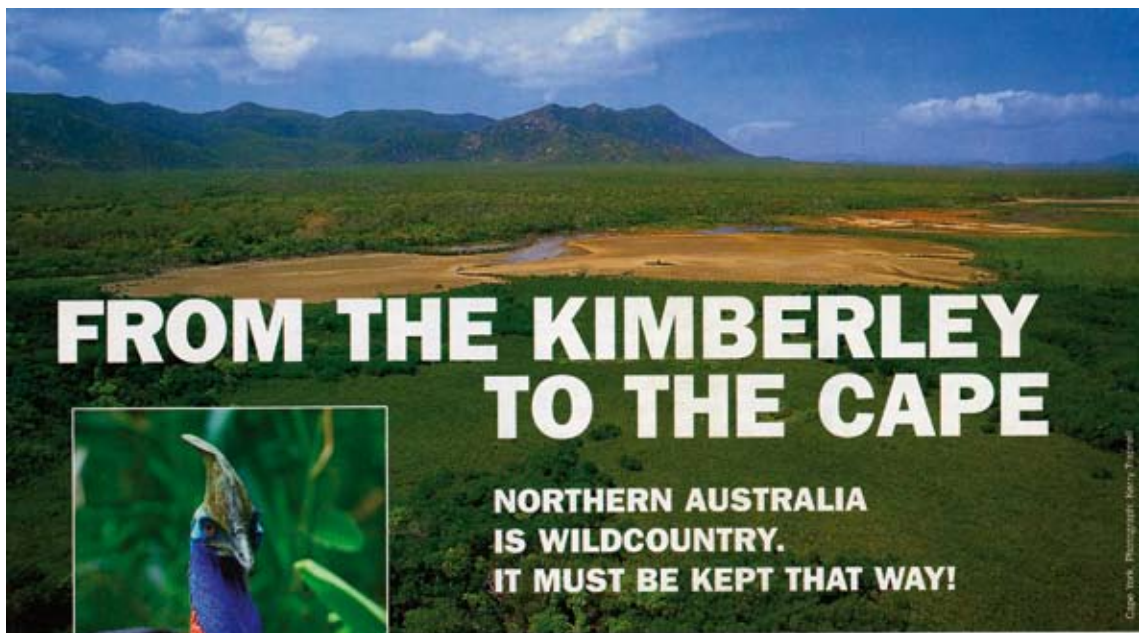
A recent example of the linking of wilderness with other land use types is the Wilderness Society's WildCountry strategy³ "based on cutting edge science and led by the community" (2005, p. 3). The strategy aims to expand the conservation imperative outside the boundaries of reserves to encompass large swathes of Australia. The whole of the Kimberley, for example, is part of the North, which is in turn one of five targeted areas. The Wilderness Society freely admits that it is an ambitious program — thinking big in time and space — and aiming to solve problems before they occur. The main strategies are protecting the best of the country (in wilderness areas), restoring important areas, and reinstating and maintaining connections between them. The Strategy's strong scientific base is founded upon seven processes of ecological connectivity.

With the turn of the century, the extremes of social constructivism have been tempered by a more measured materialism, what Instone (2004, p. 133) describes as "artifactual constructivism," combining "epistemological anti-realism with ontological realism." Such a position acknowledges both the physicality of the world and the emergent nature of its reality as it is practised into existence. Cronon (1995) originally highlighted the importance of nature close by. Instone (2004) favours an *imbrication* of the material and the social where nature inside and beside us mirrors the human subject inside and beside nature.




Figures 3.2.13 and 3.2.14. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Little red indian July 2004 (left) and weathered (right) until February 2006.

³ The WildCountry strategy is derived from the Wildlands concept of American eco-activist Dave Foreman (1991) and which was put into action by a coalition of environmental groups in subsequent years (McDonnell, 2002).



FROM THE KIMBERLEY TO THE CAPE

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IS WILDCOUNTRY. IT MUST BE KEPT THAT WAY!



Southern Cassowary, now endangered. Photograph: Steven Nowell/World Wildlife Fund

Every year, as the southern summer approaches, the humid north-west winds sweep in across northern Australia, bringing monsoonal rains and an occasional cyclone. Most years, these rains drench the land and flood the rivers and wetlands. By March the winds begin to recede and 'the Dry' winter replaces 'the Wet'... for another year.

This extraordinary climate, one of the most highly seasonal in the world, has produced the great tropical savanna of northern Australia – 100 million hectares, stretching from the Kimberley in the north-west, through the Top End and Gulf Country of the Northern Territory and Queensland, to Cape York Peninsula.

It is one of the very few tropical savannas still relatively intact in the world. The great savannas of India, the Americas, and the Sahel of Africa, have almost entirely disappeared due to clearing for crops and overgrazing by stock. Only some rapidly declining portions of the East African savanna – and most of northern Australia – remain as large, functioning ecosystems of this type.


So far, the north has largely escaped the intense development of southern Australia. Less than one percent has been cleared for agriculture, mining or townships. However, in the north, all is not as well as it would seem. Recent research has shown that many northern birds and mammals have rapidly declined in range. Weeds and feral animals, changes in the usual burning practices of indigenous owners, and intensive cattle grazing have altered the woodlands and wetlands in many areas.

Most threatening of all, cotton and other intensively irrigated crops are now spreading northward. The risk is, that the same practices that have so degraded the Murray-Darling Basin, will now be repeated in the north. A new approach is urgently needed, one that will protect the exceptional natural values and support the social and economic development northern communities need.

On Cape York Peninsula, a start has already been made. In collaboration with indigenous groups, areas with very high natural values – including Shelburne Bay and the Starcke Wilderness – have been protected from destructive developments.

WildCountry policies urgently need to be extended to many other areas of superlative natural value. For example, the Southern Gulf Wetland, Australia's largest wetland, must be fully protected. Equally essential will be the development of alternative social and economic models that will maintain, not destroy, the savanna and wild rivers of the north.


Developing and implementing WildCountry policies from the Kimberley to the Cape will be a long, difficult, but crucially important task.



Three generations of the same indigenous family meet at Shelburne Bay, Cape York. Photograph: Henry August

For more information call us on freecall 1800 030 641 or write to us at:
The Wilderness Society, 130 Davey Street, Hobart, TASMANIA 7000 AUSTRALIA

www.wilderness.org.au



RECYCLED MATERIALS
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Figure 3.2.15 Wilderness becomes WildCountry (The Wilderness Society, 2005).

In summary, arguments for and against wilderness have continued to the present day, and are an underlying influence on my art. However, in the same way that the boundaries of wilderness have been expanded in the WildCountry strategy, Sections 3.2.3 to 3.2.6 set out to discuss *wildness*, as distinct from the wilderness of environmental debates, in an attempt to broaden the possibilities available for making art: what does it mean to be wild?

3.2.3 to wild

3.2.3.1 The word: wild

At a rough count there are 6710 pages on the Internet that include the phrase “in wildness is the preservation of the world” but a further 1150⁴ which misquote Thoreau by substituting wilderness for wildness (see also Turner, 1996)! Thoreau was careful to clarify that he considered wildness to be a value that was also found inside humans⁵: “It is vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigour of Nature in us, that inspires that dream” (Thoreau, 1856 August 30). He makes a distinction between the place of wilderness and the idea of the wild (see Macdonald, 2003) but wildness still takes with it a materiality, a sense of physical-ness that now extends to the bodies of people.

Many of the more usual meanings of wild cannot be spoken in English other than by using negative prefixes and suffixes: *untamed*, *uncultivated*, *unorderly*, *art/less*⁶. The wild is in part, something that cannot be entirely delineated. To turn away from un/not/dis/less would be to acknowledge an understanding that is both *definite* and *un-defined*: definite, in the sense of a lived and physical (a recognition of living Nature), and indeterminate, in the sense of being uncomposed and unbounded, or eluding categorisation. Moreover, rather than resist its “apparent” resistance it has become increasingly clear from my work that its changing and fugitive nature requires a complementary strategy. And indeed that better comprehension of the wild arises from *working wild*. The desire of the wild is to escape categorisation⁷.

⁴ Both full quotes Googled on 25 August 2005. There were 115 hits for sites that commented on the widespread misquoting (using the search definition: Thoreau wilderness wildness misquote OR misquoted).

⁵ “I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil – to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society” (Thoreau, 1964, p. 592).

⁶ Uncivilised, undomesticated, uninhabited, unrestrained, undisciplined, dishevelled, unruly, insubordinate, etc.

⁷ Two related ideas of the thesis are to give nonhuman agency and to acknowledge the wild within humans. Anthropomorphism by definition relies upon the policing of a rigid boundary between the human and nonhuman. The question is whether by describing a human emotion to an animal or object we are only framing it in terms of our human understanding or whether we are assigning it the possibility of its own intensity or means of action: “each object has a certain force, a certain way of resisting or accepting my look and returning that look to me” (Elkins, 1997, p. 70).

3.2.3.2 Lone Twin

The performance group **Lone Twin** deal with the themes of place, travel and orientation in their work. The artists go to places: they walk the streets, and then add the stories that they find to a pre-existing tapestry of verbal and bodily phrases in their repertoire. In the Midland production of ***Sledge Hammer Songs*** (Lone Twin, 2005), for



Figure 3.2.16 Lone Twin, *Sledgehammer Songs* (Lone Twin, 2004).

example, a ritualised dance for 120 minutes to backing tapes is used to encourage the formation of sweat and its transformation into clouds of Swan River water. To describe the nature of their performances one can recount the various recurring elements: water, bodily exhaustion, rock songs, layers of clothes, ritualised body movements, and Bruce Springsteen, or one can choose words that capture the effect of their work such as “bewildered, hopeful, dogged” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) or “wonderful, funny, moving and unassuming” (in *The Stranger* alternative weekly newspaper (Seattle), Gallery Studio and Theatre Leeds Metropolitan University, 2005). Yet neither of these forms of explanation captures the complexity of the works – the warmth and bafflement – the “maximalist” busker aesthetics – or the insistent vocal delivery couched in kindness. Each work I have seen manages a deceptive artlessness at odds with its undisguisedly tightly scripted nature.

The work of **Lone Twin** seems to suggest a “deep and complex organic organization, a structure so rich that it seems like chaos” – a phrase recently used to describe the poet and environmental activist Gary Snyder’s concept of wildness (Newland, 2004). A work of art that has no direct connection to any environmental issue presents us with an ecosystem, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which seems to embody many of the ambiguities of wildness, and tells us more about nature than much ostensibly environmental art. In other words, the performances were both literally a forceful combination of visual, sound and plastic arts (C. Reynolds, undated), and more metaphorically, a community of interacting organisms (the performers’ bodies, their sweat, the bulrushes, the audience) and their natural environment (the props, Bruce Springsteen, the Swan River water and clouds) functioning as an interdependent whole. They have a “Bodily energy, sweat and scruffiness, almost unbearable, these bodies are uncontrollable” (from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Lone Twin, 2005)

In this scenario wildness can be contrasted with wilderness in that it is fullness rather than empty wasteland, is as close as sweat and not just as far as the hills, is in the present and is flexible, fluid and experimental. Again we see that, like wilderness, wildness does have an ontological physicality (see Instone, 2004 above) but it is not entirely contained or comprehensible.

3.2.3.3 The wild as “liveness”

But perhaps more importantly the wild is something to be lived and enacted. For example, at the end of the recent Kimberley Rock Art Seminar (11 September 2005 at the University Club of the University of Western Australia) invited speaker Donny Woolagoodja⁸ asked the audience *why* they were so interested to spend a whole day in a lecture theatre hearing about rock art. He said to the assembled academics and interested public [my paraphrasing⁹], “if I went to *university* I could study all about your culture but I wouldn’t *learn* anything”. Earlier in the day he had emphasised how the Wanjina,

⁸ Donny paints his Wanjina, Namarali, on paper and canvas as Aboriginal art and Namarali was featured at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games.

⁹ A transcript of this discussion will be available in late 2007

whilst associated with the Lalai (Dream-time) and physically painted on the walls, are not “unmoving” or frozen in the past like something dead. These pigments are living things. The Wanjina mingle most closely with certain living individuals who are their custodians and on death such individuals returned to the Wanjina (Mowaljarlai & Malnic, 1993). Wanjinās were regularly painted to keep them “bright” and “fresh” and to make sure their powers of renewal were dispersed out into the landscape (Blundell & Woolagoodja, 2005). People in the audience struggled to answer Donny’s question other than to answer that Euro-Australian culture as a whole was fuelled by a desire to know.



Figure 3.2.17 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Natural staining on a small boulder.

However, in a paper earlier in the day, geologist and Kimberley researcher Philip Playford had showed a “before” and “after” example of one of the repainting of rock art (some by Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) labour) that had caused a public outcry in the late eighties and early nineties. The objection had been around whether modern acrylic house paints should be used, and whether the right people had done the repainting (or whether permission had been granted by the custodians of the sites who were intimately connected to the figures). Furthermore, the position taken by Playford was that the repainting was not as skilled or beautiful as the original work¹⁰. Whilst the issue of repainting is a complex one centred around Aboriginal cultural determination (and I do not wish to imply any simplistic connection between Aboriginal cultures and wildness – see Rose (2004) in Section 3.2.3.4 below), what struck me was the realisation of how enamoured Euro-Australian culture is with *dead* objects and with the *endings* and *finishings* of things. The wild is an important concept in my work because it allows us to think of things as being more *alive*.

3.2.3.4 Negative wild?

An inevitable aspect of what wildness means in our society is its connection with madness, badness, danger and terror. These meanings are the opposite of live-ness. Artists as varied as Susan Hiller (1998) and PVI collective (2005) have considered madness and terrorism (and control) as a subject of their work. I am not interested in these specific issues, but a recognition of this negative side of the wild is a tension in my work. On the one hand, by specifically retaining a connection of the definition of wildness to nonhuman nature, it encompasses a sense of order or self-replication and self-regulation that takes place without our management or control. This is an ecosystem being autonomous. On the other hand there is also the *disorder* of danger and difficulty, and pain and death, that happens in wild places and that are the natural partners of life. This disorder

¹⁰ Are high aesthetic standards a prerequisite for Euro-Australian appreciation?

is repressed in civil society. When someone is wild it is implied that they stand outside the order of culture. Such repression is evident in the idea of wild as ferocious or violent. This applies equally to a shark, tsunami or a bushfire as it does to the “badness” of humans: a man murders in a jealous rage. Again there is a specific connection between nature and culture

American environmentalist Paul Shepard (1998) believes that the “madness” of western civilisation is due to a condition analogous to the corruption of the child’s process of growing up (Shepard’s “ontogeny”). The result is the arrested development of society (Shepard’s “neoteny”) that then leads to a romantic version of wilderness. Whilst it is a long bow to draw conclusions from the condition of childhood to the history of the world (via his interpretation of a “psychohistory”), what is of interest is his connection of individual and societal madness. Another example of how wildness is seen as badness is in Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose’s “Reports from a wild country.” She has had extensive experience with a number of Aboriginal communities in northern Australia for many years. She recounts a conversation with Daly Pulkara (2004, p. 4):

We had stopped to look at some of the extreme erosion on Humbert River Station, and I asked Daly what he called this country. He looked at it long and heavily before he said: “It’s just wild. Just the wild.” ...we were looking at a wilderness, man-made and cattle-made. This ‘wild’ was a place where the life of the country was falling down into gullies and washing away with the rains... Wild people (colonisers) make wild Country (degrading, failing). Colonisation and the wild form a matrix: settler societies and their violence.

The people she interviewed regarded both country empty of people and European colonisers as wild¹¹.

Both of these writers see the dominant culture as unhealthy but for completely different reasons. For the former it is the repression that comes from an *estrangement from* wild nature (Shepard, 1998) and for the latter it is a nature without culture that leads to a call for an ethics of “responsive attentiveness” (Rose, 2004). The lesson to be learnt from this is that just because the wild resists categorisation it cannot escape from its political and ethical consequences.

3.2.3.5 *Passionate wildness*

In Joseph Beuys’s infamous 1974 action *Coyote: I like America and America Likes Me* his entire visit to the United States was spent in a condition of wildness. On his arrival at Kennedy Airport he was wrapped in felt¹² (as a wounded person) and transported to the René Block Gallery in New York in an ambulance. The room was furnished with a shepherd’s crook, a felt blanket, a flashlight, straw, daily delivered copies of the *Wall Street Journal*, and a live coyote. Over three days Beuys spoke only a wordless dialogue with the coyote. Items like the felt and the crook were well-established meta-

¹¹ It is “...a pervasive ‘wild’ – a loss of life, a loss of life supporting systems, and a loss of relationships among living things and their country. For many Aboriginal people, this ‘wild’ was the quality of deep loneliness” (Rose, 1996, p. 20).

¹² Felt was a recurrent symbolic material in Beuys’s oeuvre.



Figure 3.2.18 Joseph Beuys, *Coyote: I like America and America likes me*, René Block Gallery, New York, May 1974. Original photography by Caroline Tisdall. Samples of these now iconic photographs trawled from numerous websites.

phorical devices that Beuys had employed to talk about wider issues in his work such as using human creativity as a positive force for social change. As time went on Beuys slept in the Coyote's straw and the coyote relieved itself on the Wall Street Journal. The coyote (with its echoes of trickster and transformer, pest and survivor) symbolized the untamed, and Beuys's wider imbrication with it and the Wall Street Journal was intended to be read as representing the schism between western materialism and the wild. *Coyote: I like America and America Likes Me* is an artwork in which the wild is *performed* as a release mechanism. It contains the condition of being involved bodily and passionately and yet tolerant of nonhuman agency.

3.2.3.6 Wild: the boundary state

The German physician and philosopher Hans Peter Duerr was interested in the metaphor of wildness in humans¹³. He paints the picture of human civilization as existing (as, say, a village) inside a fence surrounded by wilderness. For Duerr there is a separation between the human and the nonhuman. However the role of shamans and witches in what he terms "archaic humans" is to straddle this boundary: "we know who we are if we experience our boundaries and... thus cross over them" (Duerr, 1985/1978, p. 125). The purpose of the trance journey of the shaman was to travel to the origin to discover a wholeness greater than the individual self. But Duerr also believes that "we ourselves

¹³ He uses the term wilderness and not wildness throughout the book but it is clear that he is not concerned with the American (or Australian) concept of land set aside for conservation.

should turn wild so as *not to surrender to our own wildness*, but rather to acquire in that way a consciousness of ourselves as tamed, as cultural beings” (Duerr, 1985/1978, p. 125, my italics): we know who we are by knowing what we are *not*. The shaman “dies” in the real world to be able to descend to the wild world (where order and chaos cease to be opposites) and, when he returns, he is inevitably transformed. It is easy here to see the connection with artists who harnessed the shamanic such as Joseph Beuys¹⁴. Such art allows us to see the fence and understand ourselves better by understanding what we are not. Wildness is situated at the boundary between nature and culture. It is an in-between space (see Section 3.1.3 to 3.1.4 above).

Duerr complains that in modern western civilisation the hedge has become a wall, and the wall is expanded further and further out into the wild(er)ness. His position is that there should be a boundary between wildness and civilisation or between the human and nonhuman but Duerr disagrees with a culture where this boundary is too fixed, and when the transgressor of the boundary (the shaman) is eliminated. He argues that experiences such as trance states will always remain incomprehensible to an anthropologist unless they are prepared to go out and do it. But when the anthropologist does do this, then they themselves are changed, and the knowledge that they may gain is not entirely subsumed within Western culture. “But just as a world *taken for granted* is not a world understood, he will *now* understand much of his own world for the first time” (1985/1978, p. 133, italics in original). The person who accepts the wild is changed and returns from the field seeing all things transformed.

Duerr also draws on the significance of the transgression of social customs¹⁵, of the many examples of partitions between culture and wildness being temporarily reversed (“a pot in every chicken”) as part of the carnivale, or the *festum stultorum*, the Feast of the Fools¹⁶. My interpretation is that wildness is about transgression. It sits on the dangerous border between moral and amoral behaviour, but this transgression or reversal need not be entirely destructive and can act as a positive force of release or change. We should not forget that the wild can also be playful, surprising, independent and full of strangeness (Snyder, 1990).

3.2.3.7 The transformational wild

To end this part of the investigation of the wild on a more speculative note I would like to consider the following somewhat mutually inconsistent hypotheses. Firstly, if society is becoming more regulated, then is a transformative wildness (*from* Nature and *in* humans) becoming more necessary? Secondly, if the acts of society are becoming more damaging, should we be doing something about this negative wild? Sociologist Will

¹⁴ Although Beuys did at times point out that you could not return to a idealised past: “When I do something shamanistic, I make use of the shamanistic element—admittedly an element of the past—in order to express something about a future possibility” (quoted in Levi Strauss, c. 1999).

¹⁵ Duerr researched hallucinogenic substance used by witches and shamans. I am reminded of artist Francis Alÿs’s exploration of the city by walking under the influence of seven different drugs in *Narcotourismo*, 1996 (Figure 3.3.11).

¹⁶ There is a connection here to Bakhtinian notions of the carnivalesque.

Figure 3.2.19 Richard Long, *Arctic Spindrift*, 1985 (Long and Fuchs, 1986, p. 233)
Accompanying text:

ARCTIC SPINDRIFT

A day walking through snow, wind and sunlight

on a fifteen day walk in Lappland

Sweden and Norway 1985

Wright (1992, p. ix) states “Industrial society is based on a political and organizational commitment to the idea of rationality, but as a planet becomes more committed to rationality, in the Enlightenment sense of science and individualism, it also seems to become more irrational in the ecological sense of sustainability.” As society changes, will what is wild shift to include those values now pushed outside of the mainstream? Might Lone Twin’s emphasis on kindness be reflective of a hardening of society? Could one go as far as to say that such values as generosity and forgiveness¹⁷ are being marginalised, so that in effect they become wild?

¹⁷ Or others such as courage, fidelity, restraint and tolerance (see Dowrick, 1991, 1997).

In summary, the wild is a set of contradictory characteristics. To be wild one can be as destructive as a storm cloud, or angry as a tornado; at the same time, to be wild one can be eager, enthusiastic and excited. *At the same time* as it is inclusive, the wild does not reject differences or discontinuities. In my work I am searching for a sense of the wild that is comfortable with ambiguity, contains the idea of not being fully definable, and in some way “connects” nature and culture. An ideal work has some sharp edges when it comes to fury, violence and intensity, and it includes our biological nature. The wild is a transgressive and dynamically changing condition. Wildness is an active force that changes us from the inside and the outside: it interpenetrates and entangles us.

Figure 3.2.20 Hamish Fulton, *An eight day wandering walk seven nights camping from the River Saltina to the River Rotten, Switzerland 1995*, (Fulton, 2002, p. 36).

3.2.4 Rethinking the relationship

The results of my search for examples of non-urban walking between 1970 and 2005 are frugal. Most contemporary art walking in the last twenty years has been in cities and those walking artists who have most influenced my work (such as Simon Pope, Wrights and Sites, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Perejaume or Francis Alÿs) have inspired me for other reasons but the techniques that they use – that involve interactions with human cultures – are largely unavailable¹⁸. We are left with Fulton and Long and the dematerialised art object. Why is it that there have been no other widely held models of non-urban walking since the 1970s? Consider Figures 3.2.19 and 3.2.20 from the work of Fulton and Long. Common elements include vast landscapes, dark and gloomy vistas, rugged mountains, and severe weather.

Figure 3.2.21 Richard Long, *Camp stones, Aomori, 1997* (Long, 2002 p. 120).

Figure 3.2.22 Richard Long, *Asia circle stones, Mongolia, 1996* (Long, 2002 p. 111).
The interest in this work is whether this is entirely a found object or whether it has been altered or added to by Long.

¹⁸ That is, techniques from Dada, Surrealists, Situation Internationale and psychogeography, and motifs such as the flâneur, the dérive, etc., as traditionally practised, are all centred around human worlds.

Figure 3.2.23 Richard Long, *Stone Walk, Wales, 1984* (Long 1998, p. 12).

Figure 3.2.24 Richard Long, *A line in Bolivia. Kicked Stones, 1981* (Long and Fuchs, 2002, p. 68).

In these examples the documentation that is produced *as the record of their walks*, reproduces a sublime landscape where the observer remains aloof and in control of the scene. This is because we see these works through the legacy of a history of sublime landscape painting. When Long moves about rocks in the landscape to form his simple lines and circles, the most effective works are when they are composed against dramatic backgrounds. When this is not the case then the art is not effective because the stone arrangements appear meagre and ungenerous (see Figure 3.2.21 or the water on sand work in 3.2.26).

The most intriguing works are when there is ambiguity. In some cases it is not clear who made the stone arrangements (or we can suspect that it is unlikely to be the artist). Furthermore, other works by Long are more explicit about the exertion involved and the resistance of the stones, for example ***A Line in Bolivia. Kicked Stones*** (1981, Figure 3.2.23), or ***Stone Walk*** (Wales, 1984, Figure 3.2.24) where stones are transferred from point to point in a walk.

3.2.4.1 Sublime

Do the works of Fulton and Long give agency to the nonhumans elements pictured or do they merely reinforce the objective eye? Thinking about whether the works of Fulton and Long are successful in freeing up agency, led me to consider in more detail the relationship between ideas of the sublime and wildness (and not wilderness). One must be careful here because there are many different takes upon the sublime. My immediate reaction to the sublime has always been one of aversion. It would appear that this is related to the stabilisation of the self (and thus the border with the Other) as typified by the Kantian state, and a distrust of transcendentalism. One of my concerns with an approach to art via shamanism, for example, is that you have to use a special state to reach understanding, and that the focus of the audience is upon the performer. Such

Figure 3.2.25 Richard Long, *Cloud Circle*. An eight day walk in the South Tyrol, Italy, 1996, (Long, 2002, p. 24). The mountain background makes this a slightly more generous work.

Figure 3.2.26 Richard Long, *Rio Grande Circle. Third camp evening on a ten day walk in Big Bend, Texas, 1990* (Long, 2002, p. 140) The meagre arrangement makes this a less generous work.

a case relies upon the transcendent experience of the artist being transferred onto the audience. It appears to rely upon a unidirectional model of appreciation, and increases the distance between the audience and the artists: the audience is passive.

One could add that the sublime of the Romantic movement, which is so influential on the common speech associations of wilderness today, is also a variable condition. For example, awe of natural areas is sometimes connected to a transcendentalism, where contemplation of the perfection of nature draws out purification of the condition of the self that ascends above the visceral self. In its purest form the mind is ascendant and the body is split. This and a connection to primitivism is why I would not make work like Long's circle and spiral arrangements¹⁹.

However, Neil Evernden (1985, p. 32) holds strongly that not all Romantics were interested in nature, and rather that the common thread was a concern that a view of the world that was judged only by the rational precepts of (say) Locke and Newton decreased the options for encountering the environment and "deprived us of the most important aspects of the world and therefore transformed [the nature of] mankind as well." Some *but not all* Romantics used places with less human interactions (what we today might call wilderness areas) to get back to the *basics* of experience. Their overriding aim was to free up the types of processes of perception that were considered valid.

It would seem that if we continue to use some idea of the sublime as a means of articulating wildness, both the Burkean and Kantian models are incompatible not just because it is something that is undefined or not wholly translatable but also because such models rely upon viewing wildness from a position of safety and upon having a sta-

¹⁹ "Ideologies which romanticise 'primitive people,' 'wild animals' or wilderness largely accept the dominant binaries but reverse the valuation of the oppositional relationship it proposes" (Suchet, 2002, p. 146).

ble boundary between the human and the nonhuman. Alternatively, new appreciations of the sublime might rely upon reformulating our definitions. Literary scholar Barbara Freeman²⁰ for example argues that the actual experience of the sublime *as it happens* is the state of merger, and *not* the reflection of the subject afterwards. Her brand of the feminine sublime is “a domain of experience that resists categorisation, in which the subject enters into relation with an otherness – social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic – that is excessive and unrepresentable” and thus *attests* to this relationship without resolving it (1998, p. 332). This *attesting* (acknowledging the fear of not knowing but *not* being paralysed) may be a way of circumventing the spiritual overtones of the sublime that is not part of my practice.

3.2.4.2 Wonder and walking

One thread of the sublime that might be more useful is wonder, and indeed using wonder is one of the prime strategies that Evernden (1985) identified at the conclusion of *The Natural Alien*. In at least some cases wonder is seen as a subset of the sublime. English literature academic Philip Fisher (1998), however, differentiates it from the sublime because it is derived not from terror, pain and death, but from the aesthetics of delight. Wonder connects science and the visual arts. It contains the moment of intelligibility -- the aha! -- that is common to scientific discovery and to the experience of wondrous art. However, in Fisher’s model the event must be unexpected and seen visually in its entirety in the same instant. The experience must be something happening for the first time. I would argue that the latter two contentions are problematic. Firstly his definition rules out performance or anything time-based and reduces the experience of wonder to an instant in time. And secondly, it is not that something is *literally* never seen before but that the act of perceiving is a new combination of senses, or new understandings, new connections and symbolic linkages or new memories – all of which are part of the process of wonder. As such even commonplace things can be wondrous. Indeed Fisher goes on to state that wonder can be ongoing, as in the case of a rainbow, which although we may know the science of it, remains always unexpected and wonderful.

A number of writers have considered what might be the constitution of wonder and how it has changed over time (Cunningham, 1951; Daston & Park, 1998; Keen, 1969; Parsons, 1969; Quinn, 2002; Tuan, 1993; Verhoeven, 1972). What we think are wonders or wonderful is undoubtedly affected by historical factors and cultural nuances. Sometimes it is difficult to identify what is drawn out (and thus culturally specific) from the initial affective response -- the “visceral, immediate, [and] vertiginous” reaction (Daston & Park, 1998, p. 11). Phenomenologist Philo Hove (2002) begins his exploration of wonder in daily life by considering Barthes’ punctum²¹ and then elaborates what wonder does. Sometimes we feel as though the world is colourless and inanimate. We feel distanced from the people and things around us. In such a case we may feel down because everything is so totally wonderless, or perhaps we cope by wishing the fabric of life would

²⁰ Her main critique is that the sublime is a gendered construct (Freeman, 1995)

²¹ For elaboration on the role of photographs and the punctum in my work see Phillips (1999).

stay constant and predictable – without wonder. When wonder comes it brings us to a standstill. Sometimes this is abrupt and forceful, and sometimes it rises like a river. In either case it is unbidden, it is a discontinuity in the world, and we stand speechless before it. In this condition of wordlessness, parts of us that we did not know we have are brought to light.

Wonder opens our eyes. Or more correctly, our perception (which may involve senses other than sight) is shifted and we are made “fully present and open” to possibilities (Hove, 2002). The physical objects of our wonder “reveal themselves to us in an active and compelling sense”. Wonder both calls to us and impresses upon us²². This can be felt through the mind and the body, which are melded in their openness to the world. We are vulnerable when we are in this state, but because wonder itself is open, our reaction is not one of fear or awe but delight. Wonder is different from Kantian and Burkean sublime because there is no mastery by the self. It does not take life from us (like terror does) but gives life to us. Therefore we are more likely at the moment of wonder to feel humility and respect for those outside of ourselves. Through feelings of delight, inspiration and perplexity we come finally to disquiet. Wonder leaves us disturbed because we are now different. In the end – quickly or slowly – we are released back into the world, and we realise that our attempts to make the fabric of life constant and the unchanging are rent. Our ways of delimiting the flow of life are themselves gossamer²³.

Hove (2002) believes that wonder is a passive state but I disagree. I would rather call it receptive. It does not prevent action because its goal is to disrupt what are normally immovable thoughts. It stops the internal stories that prejudice our experience of life. It is not the paralysis of astonishment.



Figures 3.2.27 and 3.2.28. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. The hula skirt stranding July 2004 (left) to February 2006 (right).

²² “There is a wonder in reading Braille that the sighted will never know: to touch words and have them touch you back” — attributed to American epigrammatist Jim Fiebig.

²³ Along with the work of Lone Twin some examples of wonder in art about places and environments include Rosalie Gascoigne’s *Monaro* (1989), *Jellyfish Lake* (2002) by Dorothy Cross, John Wolseley’s *A search for rare plants in the George Gill Ranges, NT, 1982* (1982), *Another Place* by Dalziel and Scullion (2000) and *Whitecloth* (1989) by Ann Hamilton.

It may be that slowing down to wonder is a foil for the frenzied negative wild of consumer culture. It is accepting that you can't know the whole answer to something (acknowledging the fear of not knowing but *not* being paralysed), and being open to the wonder of experience. In a sense, wonder is being good-humoured about something that you cannot grasp, and that does not need us to *represent* it (or act on its behalf).

My dissatisfaction with the work of Long and Fulton may not just be because they are photographs. The rocks of Long may no longer be speaking because there is no wonder, no *pushing upon us*. If we no longer cultivate or see wonder, or if a certain art fashion ennui grips us, then our experience of artworks is the worse off. But there is always hope: "Consider the suggestive confusion between wonder and wander – as if getting lost and digression were at the root of amazement, of change, even of knowledge" (Art critic Bruce Hainley in Steiner, 2000, p. 39). We wander to wonder.

3.2.5 Wild walking

Human geographer Tim Edensor (2001) identifies whether to walk alone or accompanied, as one of the key issues in his analysis of the culture of countryside walking. If one were to propose a wilder form of art walking, is it necessary to be alone, and what are the consequences of this? There is no doubt that when walking is conducted as an activity in its own right, without distractions, we are more likely to pay attention to our senses. Since we are moving, we are much more aware of proprioception (body awareness) and equilibrioception (balance), and even thermoception (heat) and nociception (pain!). Country walking is frequently opposed to city experiences as being slower, with less distractions, "an escape from the 'inauthentic' enactments of everyday urban life, moulded by 'over-civilized' norms of behaviour" (Edensor, 2001, p. 87). In wild areas it is much easier to experience ecological processes and think through senses other than the visual. In *the walkingcountry* your bodily interaction with other humans is less and (auditory) silence (and thus the way that loud sounds are recognisable over larger distances) is a significant aspect of the experience²⁴. However, such notions of self-actualisation and self-restoration need to be tempered with an acknowledgement that the technologies and cultures of walking do not disappear in the countryside (see Edensor, 2001 and also Michael (2000) on boots).

3.2.5.1 Non-urban walking: *solitariness, endurance, leisure and consumption*

Fulton and Long rarely turn the camera back upon themselves. The empty landscapes of Fulton and Long imply a solitary art. At first one is immediately suspicious that this is connected to the transcendental power of the wilderness concept and its fixation on the self. Perhaps a meditative state in the walker is implied and this could be essential for the artistic process. Artist John Wolseley needs solitariness to empty the brain of inconsequential thoughts and situations to allow him to concentrate and to observe

24 Note: I discuss places and sound art in Appendix A.2 and silence in Section 3.5.

Figure 3.2.29 Hamish Fulton, Zanskar, India, 1978, from a chronology of his works (Tufnell & Hayward, 2002, p. 118).

(Grishin, 1998). Fulton refers to the *rhythm of the walk* as the “establishment of a basic relationship with nature” (A. Wilson, 2002, p. 28) and “Fulton walks to be woven into nature, an experience suggested, but never captured in his artworks” (2002, p. 21).

After closely reading Fulton’s biographical details I was intrigued to discover that a significant number of his walks were not solitary. Firstly it was interesting to discover that a number were done with Richard Long, but secondly I felt a bit cheated/deflated (and secretly relieved) that the exertion was not as heroic as a narrative of “lone white man against wilderness” might have implied²⁵. This does not however come across in many of the “official” artworks. Most works are attributed to a location and a significant number of the artworks are delineated or *marked-out* by distances and times. Fulton and Long are passionate about numbering and naming starting and ending points and elapsed times.

This would not be so exceptional if it were not one of the basic ways that we can represent a walk. After all, all walks have these characteristics. But it seems as if

²⁵ At least in more recent times Fulton has recorded the engagement of porters and guides.

Figure 3.2.30 Richard Long's longest recorded walk: 1648 km.

Figure 3.2.31 A walk of variable speed by Richard Long culminating in a day five estimated speed 6.7 km/hr over 50 miles (Long, 1991, p. 47).

Fulton and Long are trapped in a minimalism/conceptualism mindset. The less information presented, the more imagination is needed, and we are possibly more likely to have an experience of wonder, because it is unfamiliar. But minimal information can end up creating something that is clue-less to viewers and leave the viewer standing outside of the experience.

Because I do not think in miles it had to be pointed out to me how extreme some of their walking was. One of Long's longest walk is ***A line of 33 stones. A walk of 33 days*** (1998) which covered 1648 km in 33 days at around 4.2 km/hr from The Lizard to

Figure 3.2.32 Hamish Fulton, *Touching boulders by hand. Frozen ground No Paths No Talking*, 1994 (Fulton, 2002, p. 42). Black text reads “SEVEN DAYS WALKING SEVEN NIGHTS CAMPING SIERRA DA ESTRELA PORTUGAL JANUARY 1994”.

Dunnet Head. In ***A Five Day Walk*** (1980) the total distance was 240 km with the fifth day being 80 km (50 miles) walked at 6.7 km/hr. In ***Old year New Year*** (1992-1993) and ***A walk from One Millennium to Another*** (1999-2000) Long walked 128 km in 24 hours – at a respectable 5.3 km/hr²⁶. But, if we can’t understand the physical pain of endurance (perhaps because we no longer experience it in our lives), these statistics start looking like a celebration of the self. Any work of this type must confront the difficulty of “finding a way of referring to experience that doesn’t sound boastful, or seem to present moments of private revelation in a way which appears to call for applause” (Campbell, 2002). This is the crux of solitary walking. “[Art] Walkers have to let people know how the walk went, and no matter how modestly they phrase their stories, can find themselves in the awkward position of saying ‘this was a wonderful [sic], very private thing, *so I am going to tell you all about it.*’” (Campbell, 2002, my italics).

English literature scholar Malcolm Hayward²⁷ (Accessed 2005) points to a similar process happening with William Wordsworth where his excessive walking might be interpreted as not just experiencing non-economically productive time so that it might leave a space open for the *production* of poetry, but also that he had to be *observed to be doing this*: “Wordsworth walked a lot. He pretended that walking was work, just like that of real men. It was really a form of conspicuous consumption in its excess. He had to revel in

²⁶ The average walking speed of a human is 3.6 - 5.4 km/hr (“Orders of magnitude (speed)”, 2005) and the maximum speed of a race walker over 5 km is 16.6 km/hr (Lau, 2001).

²⁷ Hayward uses Thorstein Veblen’s concept of conspicuous consumption from *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899).

Figure 3.2.33 Hamish Fulton, detail of page of sevens (Fulton, 2002, p. 240).

that excess and produce something others in his leisure class could appreciate. This was poetry.” I would not go as far as saying this is a comprehensive accounting for either Wordsworth’s or Fulton and Long’s motivation but it does point out a problem specific to non-urban walking.

The book *Hamish Fulton: Walking journeys* (Fulton, 2002) documents some of his later exhibitions as well as devoting space to text artworks created specifically for the book’s pages. Most of these pages feature fonts either on their own or superimposed over pictures. I catch myself reacting against these because they resemble commonplace commercial advertisements. Or more pointedly, advertising using landscapes or spare text layouts is now extremely sophisticated, more so than some of Fulton’s text works. Campbell (2002) states of Hamish Fulton’s gallery works, “like any other essentially autobiographical exploration – can’t help but be, in essence, advertisements for himself. No matter how pared down, oblique and unemotive, they still read as celebratory inscriptions.” Ultimately we are *not* on the walk. Always there is the problem of communicating the experience of somewhere else (the **there**) to the **here** of the viewer. I will address this again in Section 3.4.

3.2.5.2 A continuum of walking practices

Poet John Bennett (2005) argues for a *more or less* continuum between passive introspection (meditative walking or reverie), directed thinking (structured) walking (*solvitur ambulando*²⁸), the enlarged alertness of ecological walking, and scientific (knowledge) walking as a way of accommodating the different roles of reverie and attentiveness, intention and purposelessness, knowledge and imagination. Bennett goes on to propose a framework for ecological walking that incorporates a move to action on ecological issues, post wilderness. For example, it requires attentiveness to the nonhuman and to senses other than the visual. An ecological brand of walking dwells in the present. It is strongly embodied and stresses a connection to physical experience. Bennett’s framework builds upon the “rhythm of the walk” as a way of achieving consciousness with flow (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), but does not shy away from that modicum of scientific ecological knowledge that enhances the experiences of natural areas. The tensions between attention and distraction (imagination, idleness), investigation and reverie, responsibility and play, all contribute positively towards his work as a walking poet.

²⁸ Rebecca Solnit (2001) refers back to Thoreau’s famous essay, *Walking* (1862/1964) when she writes:

Walking is nearly alone among all our human activities in its poise between doing something and doing nothing; it is not idleness, and yet as the legs move and the eyes gaze, the mind can roam with a kind of discipline and scope hardly possible in an arm chair. As the rhythm of the walk is interrupted by the surprises and irregularities of the landscape, so ideas arise from lengthy concentration interrupted by epiphanies. That is, new ideas often arrive as though from outside, seeming more like discoveries than creations, but it is only long work that takes one to them, as the walk takes one to the landscape (Solnit, 2001, p. 16).

Figure 3.2.34 Hamish Fulton, one of a number of full page text images. Original image 237 x 296 mm (Fulton, 2002, p. 90).

Table 3.2 My interpretation of Bennett's (2005) continuum of walking practices

Passive intro- spection	↔	Directed think- ing walking	↔	Ecological walking	↔	Scientific walking
Meditative walking or reverie walking		<i>Solvitur ambulando</i> — walking to help solve a problem in your head		Walking with some understand- ing of the ecological functioning of the environment		Walking to acquire disci- pline specific knowledge or to answer manage- ment questions

In 1862 Thoreau wrote, “I have met but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks — who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering*...” (1862/1964, p. 592, original italics). He praised walking through the woods “absolutely free of worldly engagements” (1862/1964, p. 595) and of letting the walk determine its own course. However Thoreau went on his walks well-prepared sometimes wearing camouflaged clothing to be able to approach wild animals and with deep pockets for equipment such as a notebook, surveyor’s gear and a spyglass. He also was not adverse to reading up about the area that he was walking through. In this sense his sauntering is aligned with ecological walking, striving to maintain a balance between the more inward and the more factual walking practices²⁹.

3.2.6 Wild science

(The delights of the wild) are temporary, and only to be as a teacher, -- we must return ever to the social life as the ark of safety, bringing, we may hope, the olive branch of peace with knowledge. For all that I have said, or that anyone else has said, our greatest and truest interests are in society. There only we acquire true cultivation and elevation. Science, Literature, Art, the greatest civilisers there only flourish. Betake thyself not to the wilderness, for a period only, and never longer than forty days, -- never -- if there is any help for it (American ornithologist John Cassin in 1856, quoted in McCook, 1996, p. 183).

Mr Tip is a male Great Bowerbird (*Chlamydera nuchalis*) whose bower is tucked under a *Carissa lanceolata* bush about 5 metres from an access track and about 40 metres from a rubbish tip. His bower is large and well endowed. The bulk of the materials in the display areas are small fragments of Portland cement from bags that get thrown on the tip when the contents get wet. Other materials include with green and clear glass, dull silver objects, bones and other grey and white stones. Mr Tip is far more successful than Sandy, whose bower is also tucked under a *Carissa lanceolata* bush, but is 750 metres away on the other side of Arthur Creek. His much smaller bower contains much less material and gets washed away when the creek floods each Wet Season. Mr Tip freely avails himself of human materials that fit into his worldview. And Sandy also takes advantage of any materials that he can get. The bowerbirds living in *the walkingcountry* do not think of us as unique or special entities. As individual organisms they carry around

²⁹ In his writings, Thoreau also liked to saunter: to wander from subject to related subject. However his wanderings were never aimless, and often helps make important connections between the natural and cultural worlds. The saunter “is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea” (1862/1964 p. 593). It is this sense that I have strived to make artworks like **To Meander and back** (see Appendices A.2 and A.4) and the six saunters of the Exegesis.

an Umwelt³⁰, a perceptual world within which they make the best fit that they can of what they experience.

Superficially it would appear science is antithetical to the formulation of the wild as I have explored it in Sections 3.2.3 to 3.2.5³¹. Bronowski (1965) defined science as “the organization of our knowledge in such a way that it commands more of the hidden potential in Nature” (quoted by F. L. Wilson, 1996). This is the classic trope of science pulling up the skirts of Nature to reveal truth. In this version one follows the scientific method based upon observation, correlation, generalization and experimentation, and it relies upon concepts such as testability, validity, reliability and replicability.

Duerr (1985/1978, p. 115) is sharply critical of the role of scientists, particularly anthropologists. He states of the scientist:

He has no reverence for anything, neither does he love anything. He throws a net over the objects of reality, he divides and classifies them. They are organized, controlled and purified; everything that might grow profusely through the mesh is trimmed away. The objects weep, but the researcher sees no tears. He clears the forest and plants a garden free of weeds, growing only vegetables that can be consumed.

What he is critiquing is the Universalist project of Enlightenment. He is criticising reductionism: where understanding is found by dividing the world into smaller and smaller pieces, going down to the origin by stripping away layers of consciousness. In such a view, science is a form of technology or an instrument to manipulate the world. Equally disparagingly, but from an opposing viewpoint, Professor Fred Wilson (1996) is scathing of a limited understanding of the role of a scientist by “humanists”:

The humanist is taught that Science is a large collection of facts; and if this is true, then the only thing scientists need do is to see the facts. Such a person then pictures colourless professionals of science going off to work in the morning into the universe in a neutral, unexposed state. They then expose themselves like a photographic plate. And then in the darkroom or laboratory they develop the image, so that suddenly and startlingly it appears, printed in capital letters, as a new formula for atomic energy.

Those who study the sociology of science (such as proponents of Actor Network Theory (ANT) and Science and Technology Studies (STS)) would state that science is more than a method. Science is global community of scholars³², and the organized body of knowledge gained by this process is contested, nurtured and inhabited by this community (and more widely). It is incorrect to say that all scientists are objective for all of the time, nor do they only divide everything into bits. But whether the dominant mode of science is to classify, predict, manage or control its tendency is to keep wildness out. Science continues to be based upon a well-bounded suite of accepted types of information and a reality that can be objectively perceived and/or measured.

³⁰ From Jacob von Uexküll's *Theoretical Biology* (Uexküll, 1985) originally published in 1909.

³¹ Especially disregarding roles and conventions.

³² And corporations.

Figure 3.2.35 Mark Dion, *On Tropical Nature*, 1991 (Dion, 1997, p. 63).

3.2.6.1 *On tropical nature*

Many of Mark Dion's works involve putting himself in the position of a scientist and acting out such a role as truthfully as possible. His intentions appear to encompass producing "authentic" data as much as critiquing the role of science in society. In ***On Tropical Nature*** (1991) he spent three weeks in the remote jungles of the Orinoco Basin in Venezuela where he collected samples that were periodically sent back to the Sala Mendoza in Caracas. The staff at the museum were asked to unpack and display the mysterious contents that arrived in packing crates. Their (aesthetic) arrangements are seen in Figures 3.2.36 and 3.2.37.

Figures 3.2.38 to 3.2.39 Mark Dion, Bob Brain and J Morgan, *Schoharie Creek Field Station*, 1995 (Dion, 1997, p. 85) In this work the artists constructed a field station for naturalists. The work has strong historical references to locally pertinent and nationally famous naturalists.



Figure 3.2.40 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Detail of *The bridesmaid's dress* July 2004 to February 2005.

On Tropical Nature connects the field and the museum. Dion describes the scientific social structures that he creates as “bureaucracies” that “mock the arbitrary constructions of natural history museums with their ingrained biases reflecting the individual and shared neuroses of the collectors” (Corrin, 1997, p. 65). Other works of Dion explore the historical juncture between natural history museums and the field, in the late nineteenth century through people such as Alfred Wallace, and earlier in history through Dion’s reconstructions of various forms of wunderkammer. In their

wide ranging examination of wonder between 1150 and 1750, history of science scholars Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park’s (1998) concluding argument is that Enlightenment science was antithetical to wonder and wonders. “Wonders and wonder limned cognitive boundaries between the natural and the unnatural and between the known and the unknown. They also set cultural boundaries between the domestic and the exotic and between the cultivated and the vulgar” (p. 20). “Since the Enlightenment, however, wonder has become a disreputable passion in workaday science, redolent of the popular, the amateurish, and the childish. Scientists now reserve expressions of wonder for their personal memoirs, not their professional publications. They may acknowledge wonder as a motivation, but they no longer consider it part of doing science” (pp. 14-15). In such a light, Dion’s work may appear to be touched with a nostalgia for a time of wonder and wonderful objects. Daston and Park close with:

Among the learned, wonders and wonder are often objects of mild condescension. They belong in the classroom or the museum. Indeed, wonder and wonders define the professional intellectual by contrast: seriousness of purpose, thorough training, habits of caution and exactitude are all opposed to wonder-seeking sensibility... Science and technology are fertile in their own wonders, but their spectacles are staged on television and in museums, planetaria, and Omnimax theatres, not at professional meetings (Daston & Park, 1998, p. 368).

Nevertheless artists have continued to examine the fringes of science through the characters that have been sidelined, or through the objects and places of wonder. A cogent example of this is the *Museum of Jurassic Technology* (<http://www.mjt.org/>). A common thread in the work of MOJT and Mark Dion is their ability to turn mute objects into active things that sing of their materiality and their social and cultural contexts, and perhaps escape the order of our (often visual) categorisation (on the latter see Attfield, 2000).

3.2.6.2 *Wondering and science*

Earlier in this section of the Exegesis (e.g., 3.2.4.2) I focused on wonder as an affective event or an initial condition that involves the body and feelings. This is not to say that there is not a “cognitive” or non-emotional content to wonder. Contrary to Daston and Park’s conclusions, wonder is often seen as the *precursor* to curiosity and thus to science³³ and this is the basis for some who point to a continuing relevance for wonder, particularly in encouraging children to discover science. Scientist and environmentalist Rachel Carson wrote, “If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow” (1965, p. 45).

In my work I am exploring questions such as what makes people choose outdoor sciences, and how do scientists resolve the dilemma of the difference between intimate experience and objectivity? My personal experience of being interested in ecosystems and places grew from wonder at an early age. My later disillusionment with science stems from realising that science as practised was for the benefit of intellectual or economic shareholders and had little to do with living things or living places. Evernden argues that the goal of studying ecology ends up being not to observe animals but to obtain “living material on which to test your theory” (1985, p. 15). I am investigating what possibilities wonder might open up to sidestep these “dead” ends. Hove (2002), for example contends that wonder proceeds with care, and I believe the respect it elicits can shape the curiosity that follows. La Caze (2002 via an analysis of Irigaray) ponders the connection between wonder and generosity.

3.2.6.3 *The new ecology (reprise)*

A further reason why I think the wild is important to science (or, conversely, why science is important to the wild) is a suite of developments that have occurred in science and particularly ecology over the last 15 years³⁴. These are to do with theories of risk, complexity, chaos, and self organization³⁵ that have affected the way that nature is conceptualised in ecology and whose effects are beginning to be felt in the humanities (Scoones, 1999). As noted in Section 3.1.5.5.1 in ecology the fundamental idea of the balance of nature, has been replaced by non-equilibrium dynamics and unstable systems. The “old” equilibrium ecology underlies the concept of wilderness, large parts of popular ecology and the conservation movement (and its antecedents in Romanticism).

³³ Socrates said wisdom begins in wonder. Descartes said that wonder was the first of all passions but that this passion was of the soul and the mind. “On the one hand, given that wonder is thus connected with intelligence and curiosity, those who have little capacity to wonder are unlikely to be knowledgeable. On the other hand, he warns against having too much wonder, claiming that an excess of wonder and wondering about things that are beneath our consideration is always bad. Wondering at everything could be said to be akin to wondering at nothing because there is no distinction between what is worthy of wonder and what is not” (La Caze, 2002). Hove (2002) contends that *wondering* (i.e. higher cognition and thus curiosity) may or may not proceed from initial wonder. Perhaps there is the wonder that rises sharply and overwhelms us like a tidal wave and then there is wonder that can pervade our world like a texture of flesh.

³⁴ I will not be explaining new ecology concepts and theories in more depth here...

³⁵ ...other than to say that the desire to find patterns – to find order, predictability and certainty – must consort with randomness, irregularity, uncertainty and unpredictability.

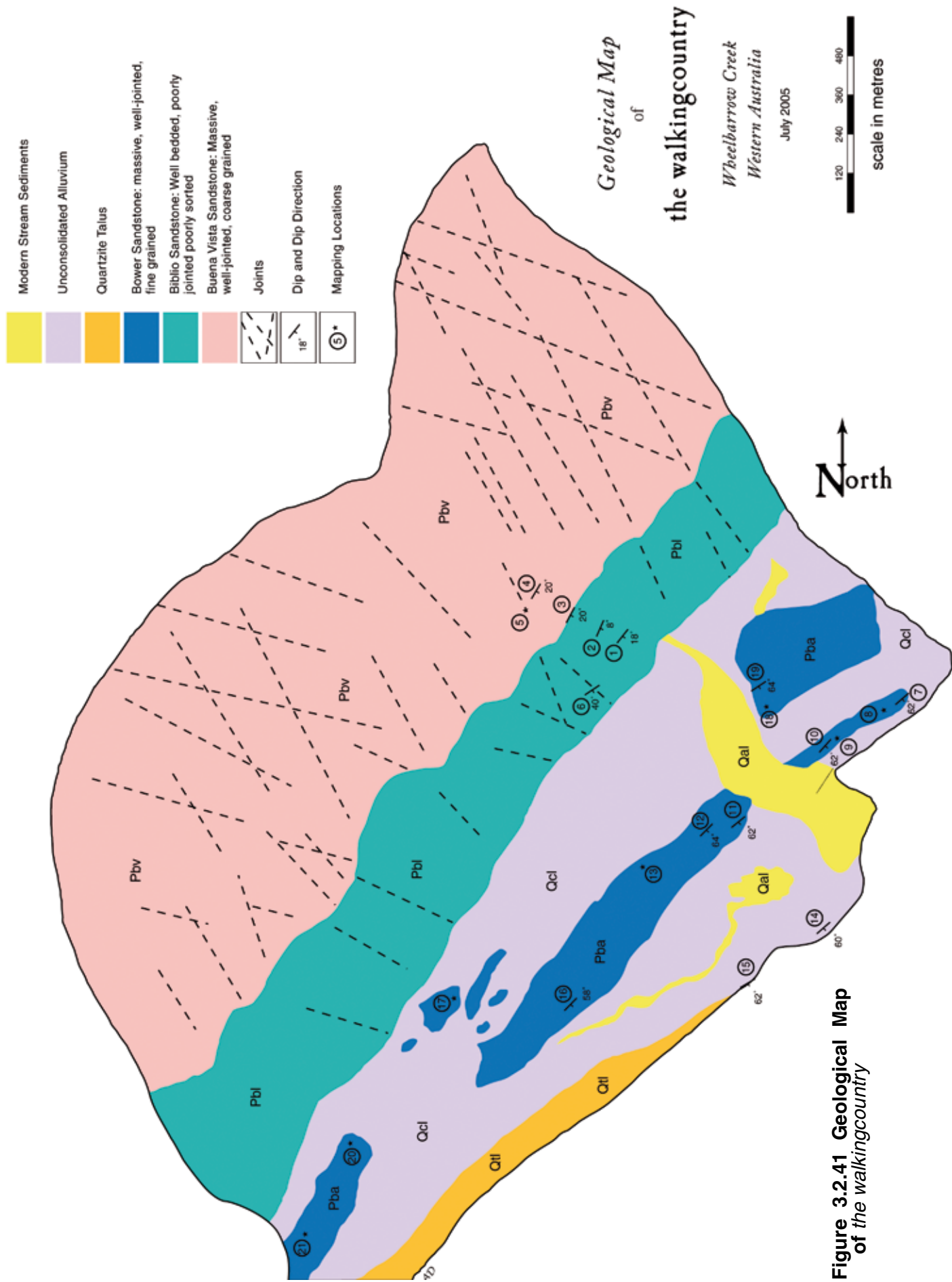


Figure 3.2.41 Geological Map of the walkingcountry



Figures 3.2.42 and 3.2.43. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Images from *The geologist series*.

Natural resource scientist Ian Scoones (1999) sketches the impact of this new ecology in terms of how dynamically we perceive places to be in space and time, and how lively we view the relationship between humans and environments and their respective agencies. The most obvious consequence is that traditional forms of ecological management can no longer have certain and stable outcomes³⁶. Non-linearity, non-closure, fluidity, contingency and multiplicity are some of the terms associated with the new ecology (Zimmerer, 1994, 2000). Ecological resilience has become a prominent framework.

Tim Low's *The New Nature* (2002) takes up the consequences of this re-evaluation. He asks us to consider that the wild is at our doorstep, and that endangered animals can be found in industrial wastelands, and that any human impact can produce both winners and losers, since something living always benefits from change. Nature is change, although the change might be more rapid than we might like. There is much merit from such a focus on wildness close by, but Low's collection of facts about which species have benefited (and what losers have in turn been created by these winners) sometimes comes across as a free market ecology or white "paw" conservatism³⁷. In other words, the criteria for deciding which changes are valued over others remain to be consciously articulated and publicly argued³⁸. Nevertheless such a new nature points us in the direction of these unanswered questions. And in these final cases, where science is made disorderly, dishevelled or unfinished, a space where ecological facts can cohabit with art walking is created. In other words, there is a meeting point in Bennett's continuum, between the walk for objective knowledge in science at one end, and the meditative walk of reverie at the other end, where neither swamps the experience of the other.

³⁶ Naturalist Richard Mabey believes that part of an aesthetic of wildness is conceiving landscapes as narratives and vital spaces of unpredictable succession. This is more in line with the dynamic and changeable conception of ecosystems that contemporary ecologists see, and in a way similar to the lives that ordinary people lead. He refers to the ecologist George Peterken's distinction between "past naturalness" a past state before human alteration that cannot by definition be recreated and "future naturalness" which is what would result if humans ceased to manage a landscape. Speaking of Norbury Park in Surrey, England, he argues that management should give wildness back to nature and "allow it room to move, to experiment, to enchant and to surprise us again" (Mabey, 1997, p. 193).

³⁷ cf. white shoe conservatism.

³⁸ Low oscillates between wanting to manage to a specific goal and a "let being be" (2002, p. 307). One wonders also whether the new ecology has made any real difference to ecological management.

3.2.7 Conclusion

My aim in Section 3.2 has been to free up an understanding of what might constitute the wild into something that is both definite (having a lived and physical existence) and undefined (or eluding classification). The wild is that part of nature that is the bridge between humans and the nonhuman. It is an active, performed entity with a strongly physical materiality. I value wild because I am closer to my body. Important themes in the wild include ambiguity, transformation, a sense of embodiment and an acknowledgement of the pain and danger of change. In turn these expansive themes shape the limits of my art practice. Wildness is a living, unfixed and fluid condition and it is a useful tool for making art about fieldwork and fieldwalking

I have made a network of the concept of wild not to confuse you but to show its many connections. Cultural geographer Rob Bartram argues “that we should reconceptualize nature in terms of its alterity and undecidability, cultivating explanations based on indifference so that we do not succumb to the seduction of locating the meaning in culture” (2005, p. 1). The wild is connected to *the walkingcountry* and the Kimberley through material nature and to art practices via walking. Wonder links art and science. Despite the move away from wonder since Enlightenment, it still has a part to play in science through the passion of human life. Science has also been profoundly affected by a move away from the idea of a balance of nature.



Figure 3.2.44 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Image from *The geologist series*.

The art walking that I do consciously strives to be wild. It takes from Bennett’s ecological walking model a recognition of the nonhuman, a sense of bodily practice and a commitment to sensing the environment. My art walking provides a situation to welcome wonder, which in turn generates art, and creates a concern for making art that produces wonder in others. Wonder is an aspect of the wild that pushes and pulls at us. By being generated by delight, it has broken off from more widely held conceptions of the sublime. It is a better model because it is caring and good-humoured about not knowing the answers to everything.

This section of the Exegesis has shown that wonder is a potent tool for departing from the work of previous non-urban art walkers such as Long and Fulton. My work is different from these precursors because communicating aliveness is important to me. I want to be more generous to the viewer. I wish to move away from traditional notions of the sublime. I may walk alone but I am not interested in endurance art. My work, whilst often still conceptual, can be seen as moving on from the dematerialised art of the late

sixties and early seventies. This is because walking is messy and involves tools (boots) and cultural conventions that are integral to the experience.

This section of the Exegesis has outlined some ways wildness might be used as a subversive strategy to interrogate science in the field. There is still much to be pondered upon though. The context of my work is a moving space – both in the sense that it involves an outside environment and in the sense that it is evolving. However, such freedom also implies responsibility. We continue to have values that guide our actions. Accepting responsibility for our environmental actions means actually doing something to change the situation. It may seem strange to imply that walking in the wild can achieve change but I hope that this will become clearer in subsequent sections of the Exegesis.

when swimming in turbulent waters, wisdom lies in knowing when to relax
and when to struggle (Keen, 1969, p. 199)



Figures 3.2.45 to 3.2.47. *Labcoat stranding* July 2004 to February 2006, pictured in July 2004.

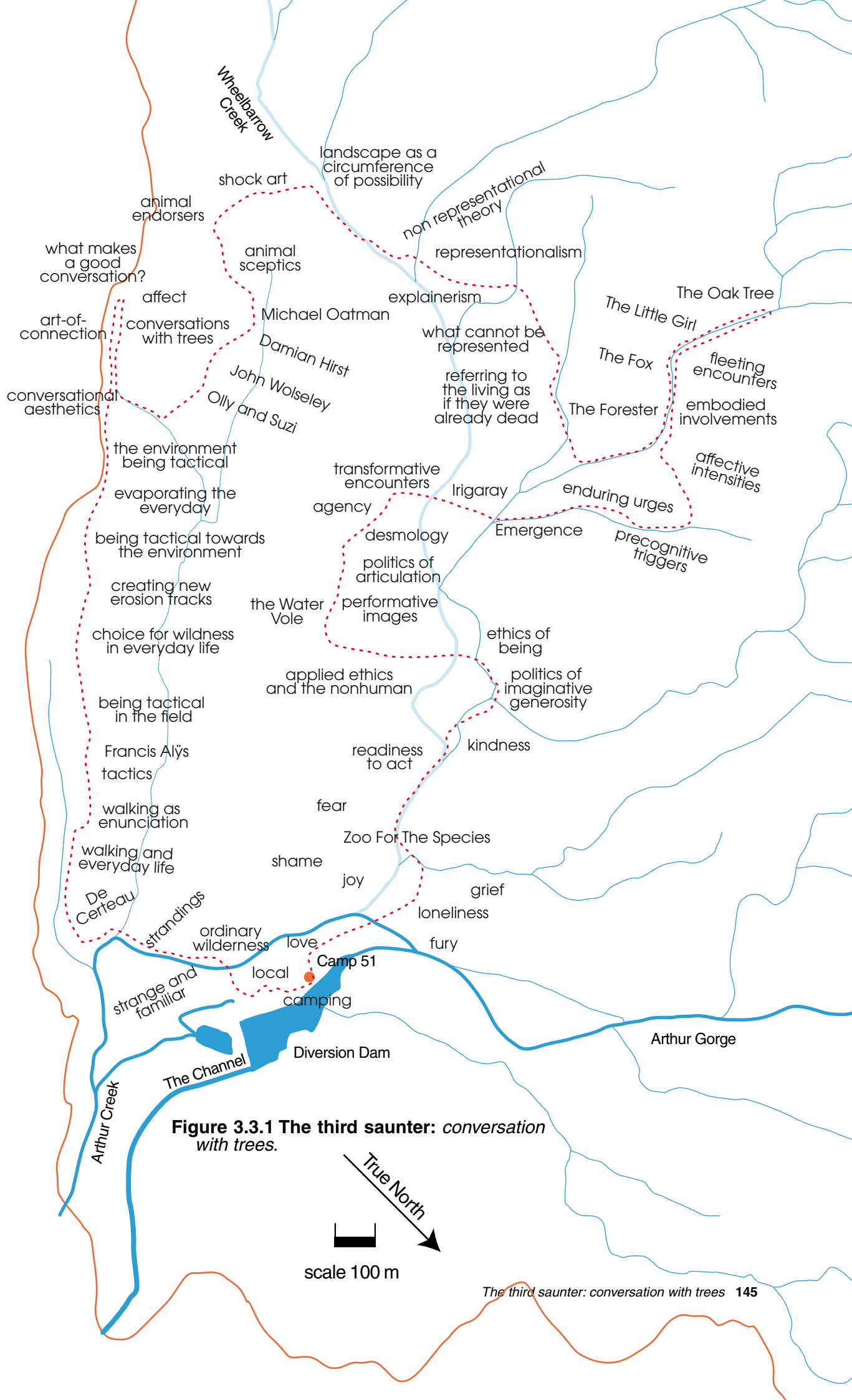


Figure 3.3.1 The third saunter: conversation with trees.

3.3 Conversations with Trees

Section 3.3 opens with an examination of how *the walkingcountry* is both ordinary and strange. *The walkingcountry* is not a spectacular place. Its beauty operates at different spatio-temporal scales. It is likely that most of the time these moments would pass unrecognised or unremarked by the greater public. By revisiting the same place a number of times it became familiar, even though one essentially remained a visitor. In the course of the project I “stranded” 73 everyday domestic objects in the walkingcountry for various lengths of time to record how they changed and decayed. Stranding these objects and the walking I did were two approaches to interacting with the surrounding environment. One similarity between them is to imagine the interactions as conversations. This leads me to consider the conversational aesthetic of Ric Spencer and other art-of-connection practices and how these challenge the centrality of representation in art. A connection is drawn between these art practices and non-Representational Theory in human geography. In both cases the representational desire to “bring back” a faithful representation of nature or to “stand in on behalf of” the Other -- to re-present and to represent – is questioned.

This section of the exegesis asks the questions: what tactics can be used by artists working with a transformative agenda? How successful are they? How is it possible to conduct conversations with nonhuman elements in an environment? A number of contemporary artists are working with animals and the environment and their artworks address to a greater or lesser degree the possibility of convivial interactions between artists, audiences, art objects and the nonhuman. The section concludes with an examination of the work, *Zoo for the Species* (2003).

3.3.1 Ordinary wilderness

At first glance the term “ordinary wilderness” is an oxymoron. Areas such as the Kimberley are marketed as *special places* and undoubtedly generate different experiences from those that most urban Australians have. But at the same time, we have seen in Section 3.2 that wildernesses are not empty of people either literally or metaphorically. For *local* people these places are both familiar and ordinary. To go to a new place we face a period of strangeness as we are not used to sensing the particular objects and events of that place. But *the walkingcountry* is not a spectacular landscape in the conventional sense and my actual field experiences, whilst joyful, were neither epiphanic nor sublime. What was the character of the ordinariness-with-strangeness I experienced? Even as a *visitor*, the days of camping re-exposed me to basic tasks like digging a shit hole, burning my toilet paper¹, getting water to drink, and having a bucket bath before the mosquitoes ate me alive. Camping involves a lot of ordinary things being done.

People camped nearby and stopped to talk to me as we shared *the walkingcoun-*

¹ As goannas were fond of digging my shit up and eating it and then leaving the toilet paper scattering over the ground.



Figures 3.3.2 and 3.3.3. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Stranded explorer socks.

try. Sometimes animals reacted to my presence. At other times I was *their* ordinary: I was invisible. Occasionally agents in *the walkingcountry* (such as birds) engaged with me with interest but in many cases animals and plants responded with fear or indifference. Unlike in cities I could not get close to many bird species since they were not habituated to humans². At other times I wondered why (without sophisticated telephoto lenses and hides) my photographs and video footage seemed so ordinary and were not like nature TV! At times when I walked it was tiny things that interested me. Sometimes walking was just a matter of getting to somewhere else. These issues made me think about what kinds of aesthetic processes were going on, and how this affected my intentions about artworks, what was produced and how I thought any audience might receive it. What was this ordinary wilderness?

The walkingcountry can be considered ordinary in its ephemeral aesthetics: a dead candlestick tree (that I filmed) with branches that clattered in the wind that came down in the next storm. Evening lightning hits a tree growing high up on the Saw Range and the distant orange eye burns for fifteen minutes before disappearing. *The walkingcountry* also holds an aesthetic of the small: finding one stone with a particular arrangement of conchoidal surfaces amongst a hectare of gravel, or a large boulder with quartz filled joints and fractures making its surface look like marbled meat. Its beauty operates at different spatio-temporal scales to more sublime landscapes. It is likely that these *walkingcountry* moments would pass unrecognised or unremarked upon by the wider public.

Each field visit built upon the previous as memory and experience transformed *the walkingcountry* from the strange to the familiar – or at least to a perplexing state of oscillation.

One of the strange parts about being in a strange place is that the feeling of strangeness comes and goes... What was strange, in time, becomes familiar, but what is familiar often becomes strange again, or stranger even than ever before (Koska, 2003, p. 117)

² Magpie larks in *the walkingcountry* were flighty and fearful and yet in Perth you can approach within half a metre of them.

3.3.1.1 *Strange and familiar*

In modern art the tactic of *making strange*³ was a widely accepted technique. In different ways it was a common strategy in Dada and Surrealism, for example. To make strange is to take what we thought we already knew well, but in fact only knew in a particular aspect, and bring this partial knowledge to the attention of the audience. It posits an estrangement from the thing in question. Finnish philosopher and aesthetician Arto Haapala typifies *art* aesthetics as being concerned with maximising strangeness and minimising ordinariness. For him the modern art process of “making strange” points to the limits of conventional aesthetic theory. The aesthetics of the ordinary are something different. “Ordinary everyday objects lack the surprise element or freshness of the strange, nevertheless they give us pleasure through a kind of comforting stability, through the feeling of being at home and taking pleasure in carrying out our normal routines in a setting that is ‘safe’” (Haapala, 2005, p. 51). In other words pleasure and safeness are the aesthetic responses⁴ we have to ordinary objects and familiar places. In this interpretation, art making takes things outside of the ordinary: “even when the everyday has become a matter in art, the context of art has created an aura of strangeness” (2005, p. 52).

What happens when you come to a strange place and start the process of making it *familiar*? Will all art be lost? And what happens when you take something from somewhere strange and place it in the familiar? To a degree this is what happens when meditations on *the walkingcountry* are emplaced in a gallery in Perth. This was one of the preoccupations of the artworks in the **Semi** show. Are such works as the bower hide installation (*herethere*) just “making strange”? Both Haapala and Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas use Heidegger’s thoughts about home and place but Malpas takes a slightly different tack. He requalifies wonder *outside* of the framework of “making strange” as Haapala might understand it (as displacement or ostracisation) by emphasizing that the inspiration at its heart is that we already belong to places.

...the encounter that wonder brings into view is just our being already with things, already given over to them and them to us... In the experience of wonder it is thus our being already “in” it that comes to the fore – our being already “there” in the very same place as the things themselves... The world is there, and us with it and a part of it, just as we are there with the rainbow, and so with the sky and cloud, wind and rain, earth and rock, animal and plant, friend and stranger. In wonder, even in the wondrousness of some single thing, the world is itself brought to appearance and with it our own prior belonging to that world. In this respect, while in wonder things are indeed “made strange,” we do not thereby find ourselves “out of place.” The “making strange” that occurs in wonder is a making strange of our very belonging inasmuch as that belonging is itself brought to light (Malpas, 2005, p. 3).

3 Ostranenie – from the Russian – to defamiliarise something enmeshed in habit.

4 A “beauty” not the same as Kantian beauty because it is not performed with sensitivity or refinement, and because it is about how the object (or place) calms the viewer to the point where the object’s own ordinariness makes it perform its own disappearance.

3.3.2 Strandings

What do a *Western Australia: An Atlas of Human Endeavour*⁵, a 1960s bridesmaid's dress, a child's Red Indian costume, the federal government pamphlets *Violence Against Women: Australia Says No* and *Strengthening Medicare*, and a black velvet pillow with Uluru, a kangaroo and a joey on it⁶ have in common? These were objects from the everyday of my studio that were left in *the walkingcountry* to see how they would fare. These were all objects that I employed to think through the questions surrounding strangeness and familiarity in *the walkingcountry*. The choice of the objects was dictated primarily by their *at hand* nature. They were at least partly meant to be absurd or random in their selection. Some (the pamphlets) had accumulated because the political mischief and the misuse of resources they represented annoyed me. When it came to use them the fact that I had two identical objects to work with was ideal – one was left in Perth and one was left at *the walkingcountry*. Other objects related to art making (disposable palettes) and representation (da Vinci's portrait of a young man), childhood, text and bookness, cartographic representations of landscapes, items used for camping and walking, and a number of different costumes for different identities in the bush. Some more kitsch objects were representations of animals as tourist souvenirs⁷.



Figures 3.3.4 and 3.3.5. *Kangaroo and Joey*, July to December 2004, *the walkingcountry*.

⁵ Given in 1979 to every school child in Western Australia on the 150th anniversary of the founding of the State. Even today they are commonly found in op-shops.

⁶ Also an old watch – display still working but crazy numbers; a green velvet ribbon; a reproduction of a Leonardo da Vinci pencil sketch of a young man; a labcoat; four plastic souvenir kangaroos; a children's jigsaw board; a half-finished watercolour; two halves of a grey blanket, a visual diary written in a yellow survey notebook, a gazetteer from an Australian atlas, two disposable paper palettes, a blanket with the pastel colours of the Kimberley; a pair of grasses (sic); some bandages; a long fabric sticky bandaid; a Hula skirt that belonged to my nanna who wore it at ukulele concerts in the 1920s; 18 books in transit; *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* by Oliver Sachs and *Labyrinths* by Borges; 6 buried blank books, a road atlas of Perth; two tents; a paper theatrical backdrop; a leather cut-out of two skeletons and a replica of a flayed human body skin; two Nikon lens caps – one found and one lost; 20 pairs of shoes; a rubber mattress; some socks; work gloves; a broken folding chair; a book eaten by fake termites; some sticks from an old sculpture; and a backpack.

⁷ Suchet argues that the introduction of domestic animal is as much about wanting to bring order to the strange. In the case of the feral, it turns on us and disorders the logic of the settler culture, a “disregard for ordering as the familiar turns strange or feral” (Suchet, 2002, pp. 149-150).

Take for example *Kangaroo and Joey* (Figures 3.3.4 and 3.3.5). In July 2004 it is taken from a box of world souvenirs⁸ stored in my studio and is deposited in a *Eucalyptus pruinosa* open woodland with grassy understorey. It was stuffed with ribbon and kerosene grass. Propped up next to a *Carissa lanceolata* its intense black stood out garishly against the bleached yellow. Returning in December 2004, the front was completely faded, patches had disintegrated and the yellow braiding had whitened and come loose and termites had eaten through the now faded red satin backing. Nearby the yellowed grass had flattened and burned blond and the tiny flowers of the *Carissa* were unleashing their intense bergamot scent.

As you would expect the transformation of these stranded objects depended upon how susceptible they were to sunlight, moisture, rain, microbial decay, insect or other animal attack. Wild sorghum grew in and through the socks that were turned from blue to grey to white with mould. The buried books were burning hot with the processes of fungal consumption. The large photographic backdrop had perished in the rain.

In the particular example of the *Kangaroo and Joey* one of my intentions was to neutralize the sentimentality underlying its production at the same time emphasizing its humorous and absurd cultural associations. It is a pillow for nobody and everybody. If you cared to use it you could stare up at the stars. My intention was to offer it to all and sundry and as it transformed it became a home for invertebrates. In December it was retrieved and returned to Perth. At this moment (May 2006) I am puzzling over its next transformation: in what way are the material remains important? Are the photographs enough to indicate these changes? Now that the cushion has faded how will its cultural meanings be understood, what evolution will it undergo next? The answers to these questions are the focus of on-going projects. And what holds this stranding together with the others? That at least is write-able: what underlies the specifics of each of these individual objects is an ongoing enquiry into whether change is possible via art practices and how this might be achieved.



Figures 3.3.6 and 3.3.7. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Palette stranding* from July 2004 (left) to February 2006 (right).

⁸ ...plastic lizards, letter holder with a map of London, leather backed windscreen cleaner from The Lizard in Cornwall, scarves with tourist maps printed on them, and a glass with a map of Trinidad and Tobago on it.

3.3.3 Walking and the everyday

Does the everyday provide the training ground for conformity, or is it rather the place where conformity is evaded? ...is the everyday a realm of submissions to relations of power or the place in which those relations are contested (or at least negotiated in relatively interesting ways)?

Cultural studies academic Ben Highmore (2002, p. 5) places this question at the centre of research into the everyday. Although differing in the degree of affirmation of the everyday's boredom and banality, artists from Dada, Surrealism, Situationists and Fluxus all investigated the commonsense everyday and used walking to critique urban life. These movements all wanted to take *action* and to wake people from their sleep⁹. The concept of the *practice* of the everyday (cf. title of de Certeau's 1984 book) saw the everyday as something that one cannot escape from. French philosophers Henri Lefebvre and de Certeau both understood the everyday as the relationship between the self and the world (the whole) where the world had major powers to shape the self. For Lefebvre (1991, translation from the original published in 1947) the everyday consisted of all the institutions and things surrounding the self that are internalised by the self. But internalisation is not a passive or neutral process. He reasoned that you could change the whole by fighting to change the parts absorbed by the self. This was history from below.

De Certeau's analysis was a little canny, arguing that you could not hope to change the whole, as it was too big for one person and too unstable in its boundaries. His position was that explicit opposition by the individual was not possible, *at the same*

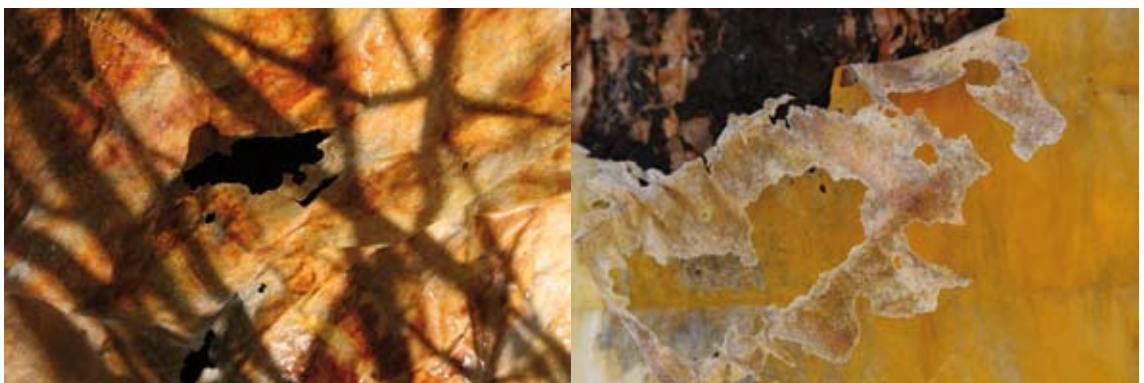
Figure 3.3.8 Francis Alÿs, *The Leak*, São Paulo Biennale, 1995, (Lampert and Alÿs, 2003, p. 179).

⁹ When the everyday became popular again in the 1990s in some cases (e.g. YBA art in UK) it was to posit it as the antithesis of theory: a trendy "dumbing down" by adopting the mannerisms of the lower classes. At worst, it became a theory indifferent to possibility of change (Papastergiadis, 1998). I am more interested in an everyday that leaves room for transformation and I want to understand this emancipatory version.

time as change or resistance was not just imposed from outside or above, *but also from within*. How is this contradiction solved? You could learn to sidestep the process by *dealing with* parts of the whole: personalising your situation. The self was inserted into the system that it could not control or escape from but it tackled the social order with slyness, subversion, camouflage and wildness. By humanising an individual's relations with other humans and by overt compliance followed by covert slipping, sliding and devious use, it humanised the social order. Both these important theorists of the everyday believed that it was an emancipatory concept.

Like phenomenology (see Section 1.4.3), the self was constituted through *practices*. But the focus for de Certeau was on modes of operation and not the subject: the individual never acted as the singular¹⁰. This lack of personal power could be a depressing scenario, but the self had ways of constituting the world by mobilising the in-between spaces and the marginal zones where power was not complete (de Certeau, 1984). This was a kind of intersubjectivity without the individual. The social might determine the conditions and restrict freedoms, but the self could still make (part) choices and take up responsibilities. By this sideways thinking de Certeau showed a way of deflecting the power of the dominant social order, a way of action for the passive, the possibility of giving power to the powerless, and a way of escaping without leaving.

De Certeau defined tactics as the ways users reappropriate the social space. Tactics included creative deflections; makeshift, multiform and fragmentary actions; the arts of concealment and ruse; and re-use, deviousness, fantasy and laughter. These processes were often evident in the ways one *used* the products that one consumed. In contrast, strategies were the ways an institution controlled the user through specific, "proper" actions. Strategies always took over space in a victory, whereas tactical advantages were always temporary, invisible and contextually dependent on time and place.



Figures 3.3.9 and 3.3.10. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Palette stranding* February 2006.

¹⁰ The "everyman" was not responsible for the *whole* of society because although he saw everything he neither witnesses it (because he is not really there) nor takes it seriously (Papastergiadis, 1998, advocating the ideas of Maurice Blanchot in this case).

Figure 3.3.11 Francis Alÿs, *Narco-tourism*, Copenhagen, 6-12 May 1996, (Steiner, 2002, p. 17).

Figure 3.3.12 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Palette stranding* February 2006. Bye-bye walkingcountry.

3.3.3.1 Walking and the city

De Certeau was particularly interested in the “everyman”. This figure was the walker of the streets of the City. It was the type of city (dense, with many pedestrians, not like the suburbs of Perth or Los Angeles) seen from the top of the New York World Trade Centre. He gives a dramatic (if oft repeated) description of the power of



the City as a utopian space (1984, pp. 91-110)¹¹. The City is set out as a logical space of text where everything is planned and known. The viewer from the top of the tower is the floating objective eye. Vision is the privileged sense: the City is “read” by the planner. De Certeau looks down at the tiny almost invisible pedestrians:

...These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognised poem in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterised by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author or spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other (de Certeau, 1984, p. 93).

¹¹ Its overuse by cultural geographers is noted by Crang (2000).

Walking is an act of enunciation. The pedestrians' footsteps trace out spaces that cannot be quantified because each step is never the same as the last. They write the text of the City without being able to read: they trace short cuts, and make choices to go or not go in the areas provided. Walking produces the "metaphorical city" of poetic spaces. These are transient spaces not of alienation but of belonging. The walkers create a sense of place in the brightly lit desert of The City, even if it is short-lived. Pedestrians fill the streets "with the forests of their desires

Figure 3.3.13 Francis Alÿs, *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* (1992-2002) slide series (Alÿs & Lütgens, 2005, p. 40).

and goals" (1984, p. xxi). They make local stories and thus create habitable spaces in the City: the memory and local stories are makeshift things that cannot be controlled.

3.3.4 Can city walking be applied to the walkingcountry?

3.3.4.1 The work of Francis Alÿs

The work of walking artist Francis Alÿs¹² clearly follows some of the trajectories of de Certeau¹³. For example *The Leak* (1995, Figure 3.3.8) where the artist purposefully gets lost and then retraces his steps following the trail of paint that he has left by carrying a leaking can as he travelled, *Fairy Tales* (1992) where his trail was marked out by a woollen sweater unravelling as he walked, *Narcotourism* (1996, Figure 3.3.11) and the *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* series (1992-2002, Figures 3.3.13 to 3.3.18). The first three examples are literally about creating an ephemeral trace interrupting the structure of the streets, and *Re-Enactments* (2000) (where he carried a loaded gun until stopped by police), is probably the most literal application of a de Certeau-like tactic. However it pays to think more carefully about exactly *what* is being subverted. Certainly the public life of the street is the arena for social comment. The streets are a field for investigating ways of operating and

Figure 3.3.14 Francis Alÿs, *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* (1992-2002) slide series (Alÿs & Lütgens, 2005, p. 154).

¹² Francis Alÿs is a Belgian artist born in 1959. He studied architecture in Belgium and Italy and moved to Mexico City in 1987 where he has been a resident up until the present day. He began his artistic career in Mexico City and most of his works is intimately related to the streets of the city.

¹³ Although I do want to imply that Alÿs is interested in parroting de Certeau's theories.

Figure 3.3.15 and 3.3.16 Francis Alÿs, *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* (1992-2002) slide series (Alÿs & Lütgens, 2005, p. 84 and 18).

Alÿs's particular skill is in how he interrogates the local to effect comment on the issues of a wider world.

My walking works *To Meander and back* and *herethere* also interrupted the pattern of the streets but as artworks they were designed *not* to be *anonymous* movements against any power structure. One should not forget that the types of responses that de Certeau talked about were not necessarily progressive resistance and could just as easily be conservative activities. They survive by not being observed. In *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* Alÿs poignantly documents the tactics of others on the streets of Mexico City but these photographs themselves, whilst operating in the sphere of social commentary, are not themselves *tactical* when displayed in galleries or published in books. Opposition (whether overt or covert) to the powers of the *artworld* does not appear to be a central goal of Alÿs's practice.

3.3.4.2 *Being tactical in the field*

Is it possible to be tactical within the science of the field? One example that de Certeau gives is the practice of *la perruqua*, or using the system for your own ends by making things for yourself in company time. In the laboratory you connive your own research or brew beer. In the field you experience nature as a side-product. You may detour to visit that waterhole because it's hot or because it is beautiful. You can sneak in some art or wildness whilst you work: I am thinking of all those photographs that I took when working for a mining company.

What is done in the production of artwork that is stealing the time of the "institution" (the art industry)? What makes this sound strange is that most artists have day jobs to make money to make art and it appears much more useful to steal time from our employers than from ourselves. The question of tactical action within the artworld is more complicated. Firstly, because avant-gardism means that anything goes, any intervention might be seen as another gesture¹⁴. Secondly, because if you were to be extremely tactical in art (or science), then you would *tactic your way out* of the system. This brings to mind Tehching Hsieh's performance, *Earth*, where he vowed to make art completed in

¹⁴ Note: art may be a good source of tactics for others.

secret for 13 years¹⁵ from the end of 1986 to the end of 1999. Lastly, if you buy into the ideals of the artworld (e.g. art is a vital aspect of society) then to engage tactically with the institution of art makes no sense (in terms of achieving goals). This is why it is more important to look at the wider agenda of change within society that artists might be interested in, or in the way artists look at relationships between humans (and others) in the general. For example, the tactical approach may be more useful for examining how we look at *FutureNatural* since it is a society-wide belief. De Certeau (1984) appeared to have advocated tactical practices for individual ecological action. It might be more beneficial to look at creating situations for people anywhere to access wildness or nature when they are meant to be doing something else: setting up situations where people have a choice for wildness.

Figure 3.3.17 and 3.3.18 Francis Alÿs, *Ambulantes (Pushing and Pulling)* (1992-2002) slide series (Alÿs & Lütgens, 2005, p. 128, 60).

Figure 3.3.19 Tehching Hsieh, *One year Performance, 1981-1982* (Hollevoet & Jones, 1992, p. 52). In this performance Hsieh stayed outdoors for one year (other than short stays indoors when he was arrested by the police).

¹⁵ Or more accurately the subject matter of his art was “I kept myself alive” for 13 years; to his *credit* he did document it and present it publicly at the end of the performance.

Is the environment of *the walkingcountry* the power that we are attempting to slide away from? The everyday activities that I introduced in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 could be considered tactical: making do with tools, making do with routes, and making do with schedules. But what happens if being tactical is evading the tracks that are already in place in an area (i.e. creating extra erosion by walking next to an already eroded track¹⁶)? Don't laugh at this: subverting nature and sliding past it by creating a new is an anti-nature manoeuvre perpetuating current societal values! The city is the location of the everyday and the makers of tactics (in de Certeau's case) are the masses. Conversely in the remote field there are fewer people working and power is diffuse. De Certeau notes that as the technology involved and organisational size becomes greater (and strategies increase) in a system, the involvement of the subject becomes less and he or she switches to tactical behaviours, but he contradicts himself when he says that tactics are best in zones where power is not complete. Are tactics less effective in the bush? I think a different theoretical perspective is needed.

Critics of the everyday point out that relative freedom of the everyday is dependent upon the latitude of choices and question whether tactical practices are still effective today. De Certeau (1984) himself identified that the social order was becoming more and more sophisticated. Nothing is stable or settled. Existence has been reduced to the here and now. One important consequence of this is the destabilisation of the home and a sense of lack of belonging: today's everyday is held together with ockie straps (T.



Figures 3.3.20 to 3.3.23. Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Shoe stranding* February 2006.

¹⁶ Similar to the way that people create desire lines across city parks.

Smith, 1998). It is perceived as constantly new and you have to have your wits about you. Can change still happen? De Certeau opened up a space by showing that people were not simply duped by powers they could not control.¹⁷ But Australian arts writer Ingrid Perez prefers Maurice Blanchot's sceptical assertion on the evaporative nature of the everyday: the everyday exists because we don't think about it, and ceases to exist when we do (Perez, 1998). There is ongoing critique of whether any of these tactics actually make any difference in life: how can you wish for something that you don't even know exists (because you haven't experienced it)? How can such minor tactics make lasting change? When is trivia, just trivial?

When de Certeau's theories have been applied without a sense of fluidity the categories of powerful and powerless become reinforced and inflexible. Cultural studies academic Brian Morris contrasts the trajectories of gay men and policemen on the beat as evidence that not all walking practices are automatically resistant, and every walk is a miscellany of differing and changing relations. He contends that, "spaces of 'resistance' have, to a certain extent, been mapped and codified... [and this] suggests the operation of a more complicated order of power that is articulated through practices that are neither strictly compliant nor resistant" (Morris, 2004, p. 697). In the field of human geography John Wylie (2002, p. 445) criticises de Certeau's theories as being "overly simplistic and manichean [sic] modelling of different knowledges." According to Nigel Thrift, the danger of those that work from the perspective of de Certeau is that they downgrade "everyday life to residual Rabelaisian pockets of resistance in an ever more programmed and an ever more frantic world..." (1999, p. 300). They can only see an oppositional model.

¹⁷ Although it only takes one marketing guru to get hold of this and give us manufactured pseudo-tactics (see Figure 3.3.24).

CURIOUS INVESTOR BEHAVIOUR No 14

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Figure 3.3.24 *Curious Investor Behaviour No 14 (Platinum Asset Management, 2006, p. 42).* An example of a tactical approach being co-opted by advertising.



Figure 3.3.25 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006.* Shoe stranding February 2006.

Can nature be tactical against humans? Do the many nonhuman entities in nature act as the “masses” and shape their relations with humans? How can we say that trees and rocks have social relations? This latter case is attributing agency and ascribing action where there appears to be indifference to humans. It sounds absurd. But Tim Low provides many examples of where plants and animals interact with humans to their own benefit. One example is the swallows that nest inside Rockhampton’s railway station that have

learnt to use the automatic doors to get in and out of the building (Low, 2002, p. 8). In *the walkingcountry* animals and plants, by their very nature, take advantage of the circumstances around them. For example, the banks and waters of the permanent Diversion Dam and almost permanent flow of water down Arthur Creek that is provided for the irrigation operations is of course taken advantage of by many plants and animals. Nature is tactically reappropriating the space of the human. The plants and animals do not need to speak (verbal English) to you to be able to do this.

3.3.5 The possibility of conversations

It is now time for conversations. Walking artist¹⁸ Ric Spencer has conceived the concept of “conversational aesthetics” as a way of transforming the position of a walker from voyeur, stalker and protagonist, to conversationalist or participant in the “ebb and flow” of walking art. In his PhD thesis, *Hermes Gift* (2004), he has adopted a phenomenological position. Of the very first step of a walk he writes, “the step is a projection of the body into the world – a confirming and involving into action. To implement (...if there can be an implementation of the phenomenological reduction) the articulation of a phenomenon demands a being-within, *a simultaneous extraction from and a giving back to*” (Spencer, 2004, p. 1, italics in original). With such an approach there is no longer a division between the subject and the object as they are co-constitutive. Working primarily from a reading of Heidegger, his work clearly implies that people come into existence through interaction with the world. He calls conversational aesthetics¹⁹ both a grounded and an embodied philosophy. Even the format of Spencer’s exegesis strongly reflects the philosophical position that he has taken – in the form of a wander and a conversation through different topics -- each of the topics connected by hypertext to make up a

¹⁸ Writer and father (Spencer, 2005b).

¹⁹ Rebecca Solnit has tried to write in a way that reflected the working approach of the artists who most impressed her. These artists had “a desire to work collaboratively, ... (were open) to new ideas and new media and contexts, ... (and were interested) in responding to existing places and phenomena” by going out to engage with the everyday “interact(ing) with their subjects and sites with a conversational give-and-take, assuming that meaning is to be found rather than imposed (Solnit, 2001, p. 5). Solnit called this the conversational approach.

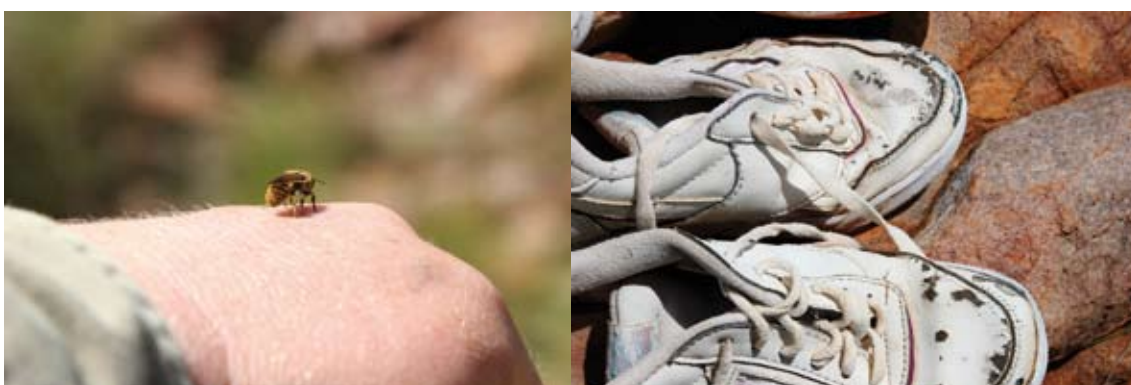


Figure 3.3.26 Ric Spencer, *Barefoot, Glasgow, 2004*.

polyphonic (and rhizomatic) framework.

As could be expected from its philosophical precedents, conversational aesthetics does not have a strict methodology – prizing fluidity rather than fixity, and being rather than endpoints. To achieve a conversational aesthetic one approaches a walk as if it were a conversation. By definition a conversation is sociable, and has at least two strands of opinion. In other words, the artist operates as if they were having an informal talk with somebody, or a nonverbal exchange that is perceived to have the qualities of conversation. Spencer talks about “feeling with the eyes and seeing with the body” (Spencer, 2005a, personal communication). Inverting the senses is one way of sifting down to the more basic levels of exchange – disrupting our habitual behaviours, injecting some wildness and turning things on their heads.

This type of artwork has the potential to “acknowledge, rather than exile, the non-verbal” (Kester, 2004, p. 9) because it is a bodily process of collaboration in the flesh.



Figures 3.3.27 and 3.3.28. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Native bee and *Shoe stranding* (February 2006).

Nothing is forced in the conversations that Spencer has: the participants are held and supported in a non-threatening environment. It is an informal talk, a to-ing and fro-ing: a listening and a speaking. For Spencer there is a conscious recognition of the artist (and writer) as an *instrument of the world*. Conversational aesthetics requires that the participants become conduits for their surroundings – an open channel that implies at least a meditative if not a quasi-spiritual position of allowing things to flow through you. In this way you are more aware of the peripherals than the (linear) route. We come into a conversation with a point of view but in the best of conversations we relinquish our control to let the exchange travel to unknown lands. The best of conversations embraces twists and turns and improvisations. Listening (by the artist and the audience) becomes as important as speaking.

The kinds of artworks Spencer has evolved include durational walking through the streets. The projects are often documentation with digital photography brought back onto a digital display in the gallery. In *Somnambulism* (2003) he arrived in an empty gallery in Glasgow to do a walking project over four days and four nights. This involved sleeping in the gallery and walking the streets each day. He constructed a written first person narrative work that included digital photos. The gallery where he slept ended up containing some of the traces of his activities as every day he produced a digital visual diary of his travels. In *Barefoot [I cover the waterfront]* (2004) Spencer walked along the shores of the Clyde in Glasgow. Over the four days he recorded the tracking of his international roaming mobile phone by Vodafone and Orange to produce a trace of the event. The performance ended on the last day when he was waylaid by the police: “I got asked to put my shoes on and move along on the final morning (which ended my piece)” (Spencer, 2006, personal communication).



Figures 3.3.29 and 3.3.30. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. WA 79 Atlas stranding July 2004 (left) to February 2006 (right).

3.3.5.1 Art-of-connection

It is clear that Spencer’s conversational aesthetics is related to other art practices, themselves linked by ideas of dialogue and change. In Section 1.8.8 I grouped these types together as art-of-connection. Fundamental to all these types is the shift in

the relationships between the artist, audience and art object and I outlined a model of the artwork that specified a more open relationship between artist and audience, as well as a freeing up of the material manifestation of the artwork. These kinds of art-of-connection practices challenge how you evaluate what you see.

For art historian and critic Grant Kester (1999/2000) art-of-connection (...or what he terms “dialogic art” via Bakhtin) should be discussed in terms of the “condition and character of the dialogic exchange itself... [and] the specific effects produced by these exchanges in a given context” (Kester, 1999/2000). In the case of Spencer’s work, one would presume that a good or even beautiful (i.e. judged aesthetically positive) artwork is related to the measure of a good conversation. Do I feel that I have been listened to? Did I learn new things from others in the conversation? Was the quality of the interactions good²⁰? Did I walk away with a positive response? And who is asking these questions: critics, audiences, artists, funders or others? Who are the participants or the communities that are implied in these works?

Kester (1999/2000) outlines a number of tensions in art-of-connection practices. In modern art the artist has an almost “given” role to intervene in the world. Dialogic art challenges the extent to which an artist can speak on behalf of or represents the other. Kester alludes to influential art commentator Hal Foster’s critique of the artist as ethnographer (see Foster, 1996) because the itinerancy of contemporary art can easily preclude artists working for a sufficient time to develop trust in communities. Furthermore, is the privileging of dialogue as a power to transform, discursive determinism? In other words, are we overemphasizing the potential ability of discourse without acknowledging material or societal problems in many of the areas where these community-based projects are sited (see also Beech, 2004; Milevska, 2006)? Art historian Miwon Kwon, for example, critiques a simplistic *artist + community + social issue = new critical/public art* equation (2002, p. 147). Who chooses where the project is sited? What rhetorical strategies are employed and by whom? What happens when participants disagree? What about anger²¹?



Figures 3.3.31 and 3.3.32. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. WA 79 Atlas stranding July 2004 to February 2006.

²⁰ Fine, worthy, agreeable, proficient, clever, helpful, kind, wonderful or beautiful?

²¹ It should be noted that Spencer’s conversational aesthetic precludes types of talking (and walking) that command or control discursive space.

Kester makes a specific case for challenging the feelings of empathy sometimes mobilised in poorly considered community projects. For him, empathy as pity is limited to partial identification with the other. An empathetic response by the artist does not change the conditions of any relationship: the other is not expected to answer back. To truly alter these conditions requires a shift of the position of the artist to co-creation that is one of the goals of Spencer's work.



Figures 3.3.33 to 3.3.36. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. WA 79 Atlas stranding July 2004 to February 2006.

Unlike Kester (2004) who appears to hold the position that the formal material aesthetics of dialogic art projects are irrelevant, I hold that the *visual* impact of these projects remains important. At times art-of-connection has been criticised for being unaesthetic – not necessarily of not having an art object, but of having little impact on a viewer (specifically a critic or external audience). Is this a question of aesthetics as argued by art historian Claire Bishop (2004)²²? That is, are these artworks poor because they have little beauty? She believes that these projects are caught up in issues of goodness or ethics which should be kept separate from aesthetic judgements (see also Anonymous Artist (who has made both good and bad environmental art), 2005). Is it that the effects are in forms other than visual? Or is it slightly different: that the affective processes of the artwork are lessened.

²² Bishop has critiqued representational art in a number of fora (in October in 2004 in Circa in 2005 and Artforum in 2006 Bishop, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Curtin, 2006; Gillick, 2006; Griffin, 2005; Kester, 2006; Watson, 2005).

3.3.5.2 Affect

Judging affect has a long history in art aesthetics. It is understood in psychology as a subject's externally displayed mood²³ and thus is traditionally manifested as being represented *in* artworks (e.g. passion paintings) or if not realistically presented, as experienced *by* an audience. But it has also been used more recently as a sense of *push* in the world²⁴. By this I mean that to be considered successful there must be force involved: for example of the artwork upon the artist, upon the other participants, or upon people outside of the direct circle of involvement. Could it be that one of the challenges of art-of-connection is that the affect is felt most strongly by those *within* the process – and that the affect of the process by proxy (i.e., by those who look upon the artworks from the outside) is not nearly as satisfying? After the project is finished, after the artist has left, after the community gets on with things, little remains -- after the fact. This “lack” may be liberating or it may be disturbing if the intention of the project was transformational.

The Spinozan or Deleuzian concept of affect requires careful unravelling, but it seems to imply that it is a potential for movement, a “capacity to come to be, or better, to come to do” ...a type of “thinking, bodily – consciously but vaguely, in the sense that it is not yet a thought” (academic and social critic Brian Massumi in Zournazi, 2003). Certainly Massumi talks about it in terms of intensities, of being more alive, and one of the tensions of art-of-connection is how clearly the push of the world upon us or the force of its fleshing upon/in us is evident in either the artwork process or its material manifestation.

Perhaps one of the drawbacks of conversational aesthetics is that it can be seen as passive. The artist as conduit does not seek transformation or social intervention. For example an interventionist agenda is not a noticeable part of Spencer's projects. The other side of a conversation art is dialogue for social intervention. Grant Kester's orientation is towards projects where artists directly/intentionally interact with the audience, particularly to produce social change (for example see Kester, 2005) and this is something that I continue to be interested in.

3.3.5.3 *Conversing with trees*

Spencer's work does not explicitly address nonhuman life and I suspect that this is because of its specifically urban context. Spencer does state that, “*Hermes Gift* is a phenomenological discourse on walking and the conversations with both material and people that has occurred along the way” (2004, p. iii), so one can at least conclude that

²³ Psychology subjectively experienced feeling state (emotion) and the observable behaviour that represents it.

²⁴ The influential English cultural geographer Nigel Thrift (2004a) identifies four types or strands of affect:

1. as “a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining” (p. 60)
2. as emotions that are “primary vehicles or manifestations of the underlying libidinal drive” (from Freud and psychology) (p. 61)
3. (from Charles Darwin) as emotions expressing evolution... “physiological changes written involuntarily on the face” (p. 64)
4. as a “capacity for interaction that is akin to the natural force of emergence” (p. 64) ...[as] “an encounter that takes the form of an increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act” (p. 62). This most problematic definition is via Spinoza and Deleuze (and Massumi) and it specifically **separates** affect from emotion.

Figures 3.3.37 to 3.3.39. Olly & Suzi, *Shark I Shark II Shark III*, South Africa, 1997
(Olly & Suzi, 2003, p. 167).

Figure 3.3.40 Olly & Suzi, *Saltwater Crocodile and Painting*, Northern Australia, 1999 (Olly & Suzi, 2003, p. 215).

Figures 3.3.41 to 3.3.44. Olly & Suzi, clockwise from top left *Olly & Suzi painting Croc Belly* Northern Australia, 1999; *Working with Scientists*, Northern Australia, 1999; *Croc and print*, Northern Australia, 1999, non-toxic paint on paper; *Red Croc*, *Green Croc*, Northern Australia 1999 Acrylic and body print on paper 42.5 x 51 cm (Olly & Suzi, 2003, p. 213).

Figure 3.3.45 and 3.3.50. Olly & Suzi, *Taking the Print, Northern Australia, 1999; Saltwater Crocodile and Painting, Northern Australia, 1999* (Olly & Suzi, 2003, p. 216).

the participants in the projects can include “matters” other than people. Again, the question arises, is it possible to have conversations with nonhuman elements in an environment? Can one have a conversation with a rock? Of course this is a nonsensical question²⁵(!) -- if we restrict the idea of conversation to verbal or written language. A number of contemporary artists are working with animals and the environment and their artworks address to a greater or lesser degree the possibility of convivial interactions between artists, audiences, art objects and the nonhuman.

For example, the majority of the work of artist duo Olly and Suzi is based upon drawing animals in mixed media on paper drawn as close as possible to the wild animal in question. Their work often involves creating a situation where animals interact directly with the drawing by chewing, scratching, biting, walking or rolling on top of the work. The paper acts as the fabric of the interaction or the material sphere of the relationship. The immediacy of their drawings is both a delight and a drawback. Especially when sup-

²⁵ According to the Victorian art historian John Ruskin, pathetic fallacy was the description of inanimate (natural) objects in a way that attribute them with human sensations, thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Figure 3.3.51 John Wolseley, *Buried painting - Mt Gunson, 1991-1992*, (Grishin, 1998, p. 124). Watercolour, coloured pencil, pencil and charcoal on paper 54 cm x 39 cm, photo Terence Bogue.

ported by the (often beautiful) photographs that document the event, a sense of being close to the wild is glimpsed in the work. But their naive style (indebted to Joseph Beuys) occasionally fails as a visual image (and there is no going back to the drawing board and doing another). When shown as single images you don't see some of the interventions needed to "capture" their prey²⁶. To their credit Olly and Suzi do acknowledge their debt to the many wildlife parks and scientists who facilitated their access to the animals. But Olly and Suzi are also very focused on predators and big game (lions, sharks, cheetahs, wolves, elephants and polar bears) in stereotypically wilderness locations. The element of personal danger seems to be needed by the artists. Yet they often relied upon tame or semi-tame animals for their interactions (and this is not evident in single images of their work). I am subtly reminded of John Wolseley's delicate burial of drawings (see Figure 3.3.51). In this work Wolseley relies upon termites and micro-organisms to perform the transformation. The work takes place away from the eye of the camera. The relationship between the artist and the nonhuman appears to be less gendered. Wolseley's drawings are more about ecosystem structure than big game.

3.3.6 Representations

Other artists who have included the nonhuman in their work do so in ways that create deathscapes of "coolness, cruelty, and nihilism" (Urban, 2004, p. 372)²⁷. Damien Hirst's 1990s work is no doubt concerned with other issues such as an exploration of mortality, but no member of the public can fail to be affected by his use of animals (see Figure 3.3.52 *This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home*, 1996, (Adams, Jardine, Maloney, Rosenthal, & Shone, 1997, p. 98). Michael Oatman's work (see Figures 3.3.53 and 3.3.54) featuring birds with machine guns held under their wings plays upon a certain kind of representation of animals as the opposite

Figure 3.3.52 **Damian Hirst**, *This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home*, 1996, (Adams, Jardine, Maloney, Rosenthal, & Shone, 1997, p. 98). Steel, GRP composite, glass, pig, formaldehyde solutions, electric motor 2 tanks each 120 x 210 x 60 cm.

²⁶ There is more extensive documentation in *Olly and Suzi: Arctic, Desert, Ocean, Jungle* (Olly & Suzi, 2003).

²⁷ It's not just dead animals that make a deathscape. Personally I frequently collect living and dead pieces of plants; and bones and animal remains. But these remains talk more about the cycle of life and death which I am a part of – about vitality rather than death or "deadness".

Figure 3.3.53 Michael Oatman, *Study for the Birds*, 2001, collage (Thompson, 2005, p. 88).

of humans, as base and bestial. Art historian Steve Baker²⁸ (2000) muses that animals can be used in art along a continuum from animal-endorsers to animal-sceptics. I would consider Hirst and Oatman to be examples of the latter. Are the birds in Figures 3.3.53 and 3.3.54 actively reshaping the world (i.e. turning violence back on humans) or are they merely re-presenting human concerns? Hirst and Oatman use the pig and the birds as *tools* to examine the meaning of animals in human culture. Where the nonhuman are featured in artworks, which ones show engagement and dialogue with living and vital others? Geographer Sandie Suchet (2002) asserts that western culture only has a conversation with the self – a “monologue masquerading as conversation” (D. B. Rose, 1999, p. 177).

By applying universalised Eurocentric knowledge, other knowledges are rendered silent, are ignored, devalued and/or undermined so that Eurocentric knowledges only hear, see, smell, taste, touch and engage with themselves. This denial of any dissent or alternative forms a circular argument as Eurocentric knowledges have only their own terms of reference to judge themselves against and thus the assumption of universality is legitimated (Suchet, 2002, p. 149)

I draw attention to the prevalence of a corrosive force in the work of Hirst and Oatman (for example) designed to shock the viewer. These types of works are based upon a one-way communication model. An alternative to this is the creation of artworks that favour openness, integrating the co-creation of Spencer’s walking art, and expanding outwards from this to include physical and creative interventions. In the case of this art, the “essentially representational relationship to nature has been supplemented by

²⁸ I am indebted to Baker’s (2000, 2002) elucidation of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of *becoming animal* which, regrettably, cannot be fully explored here.

a commitment to direct intervention” (Kester, 2005). These works are created with a pragmatics of acting in the world. Rebecca Solnit’s interest in artists working in the environmental field has propelled her writing:

...it is important, however, not to describe artists as returning to the land. Rather than doing something so simple as stepping backward into an uncharted territory, artists together with other thinkers have reinvented the relationship we have to the land... (Solnit, 2001, p. 45).

Much of modernist art was an idealistic searching for order, clarity, perfection and purity. But the same organic world that such art sought to overcome is now recognised as the basis for our continued existence, “...linear time bends in a circle. Landscape comes to the fore, no longer the territory of nostalgia but the circumference of possibility, the terms of our survival” (Solnit, 2001, p. 51). A new possibility for artist today is to respond to sites, materials and people to help insights into being rather than impose an external meaning on a supposedly inert world of objects. It is not to re-present a relationship

Figure 3.3.54 Michael Oatman, *Study for the Birds*, 2001, collage (Thompson, 2005, p. 86).

between a repressor and the repressed (with the artist *representing* the repressed). “The point is not that these actors are mutes that then have to be made to speak, it is rather that their practices need to be valued *for themselves* as the somatic legacy we all live by, with and for” (Thrift, 1999, p. 300, italics in original).

3.3.7 Non representation: drawing connections to human geography

The kinds of ways that the nonhuman have been explored in art can be linked to investigations into non-representational theory in human geography. The term was initially promoted by human geographer Nigel Thrift in his book *Spatial Formations* (1996). Figure 3.3.55 outlines the intellectual antecedents as he sees them. Thrift and a number of geographers have worked through theories of non-representation to differentiate their position from Representationalism (or what I like to call explainerism): the need to explain, to show things the way that they “really are”, to come up with an irreducible conclusion. Representationalism is a fundamental condition of modernity that underlies, for example, the scientific method, or realist art. One of the consequences of representationalism is a “curious vampirism” where events are drained of life (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, & Wylie, 2002). It is as if worlds are made before they are lived in. In art it is as if meaning

Figure 3.3.55 The life-time-lines of non-representational theory (Thrift, 1999, p. 303).

precedes the art object and as if the art object is but a passive *conveyor* of meaning. It is as if meaning is formed in the mind (of the artist—of the audience). These normative beliefs are widely held by artists.

The criticism of representation is that it brings things to an ending, a fixed point unifying the object and its identity once and for all. And if there is something that it cannot be represented, then it is ignored or dismissed: “that which cannot be reduced is deemed to fail the epistemological test of validity... [Representation results in] a relegation of certain forms of knowing (and being) to the secondary position of the subjective; to matters of opinion, to dreams and fantasies, to unverifiable and fleeting ‘feelings,’ and the position of the ‘native’” (Harrison, 2000, p. 500). Representation silences by insisting on the silence of the living *by naming them as if they were already dead*. Compare in the following paragraph the understanding of the (European) forester and the fox:

...for the non-human, every thread in the web is a relationship between it and some object or feature in the environment, a relation that is set up through its own partial immersion in the world and the bodily orientations that this entails. For the human, by contrast, the web – and the relations of which it consists – is inscribed in a separate plane of mental representations, forming a tapestry of meaning that covers over the world of environmental objects. Whereas the non-human animal perceives these objects as immediately available for use, to human beings they appear initially as occurrent phenomena to which potential uses must be affixed, prior to any attempt at engagement. The fox discovers shelter in the roots of a tree, but the forester sees only timber in his mind’s eye, and has first to fit that image into his perception of the current object – the tree- before taking action (Ingold, 1995, p. 63) ²⁹

Figure 3.3.56 *Forester and oak tree* illustrated by G. Kriszat (Uexküll, 1957/1928, p. 74).

²⁹ This perspective is obviously indebted to both early 20th century Estonian biologist von Uexküll (1957/1928, 1985/1909) and mid century American psychologist J J Gibson (1966, 1979).

Figure 3.3.57 *Fox and oak tree* illustrated by G. Kriszat (Uexküll, 1957/1928, p. 76).

Figure 3.3.58 *Little girl and oak tree* illustrated by G. Kriszat (Uexküll 1957/1928, p. 75). Note face in tree.

For the forester the tree is a dead thing before it is a living thing. Correspondingly in the arts, Kester (2006) introduces feminist theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept "paranoid consensus" in contemporary critical theory where the act of revealing (representing) an injustice is compulsively repeated. Think of the artist that represents, say, an environmental issue who "obsessively repeats the gesture of 'unveiling hidden violence' to a benumbed or disbelieving world." This first step of portraying an issue in environmental art is enabling and necessary but if the artwork is caught up in the act of revelation itself it goes no further. Representationalism stops people from *going on*. I am reminded of Hirst's pig going back and forth... back and forth... (in Figure 3.3.52).

Non-representational theory is relational rather than representational (Thrift, 1999)³⁰. It asks us to think of different ways that we might relate ourselves to our sur-

³⁰ "We no longer need ontology but desmology" (desmos = link): a science of linkages (quotation widely attributed to Michel Serres).



Figures 3.3.59 and 3.3.60. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Jacob von Uexküll's most celebrated example of the Umwelt is that of the tick.

roundings and different ways that we might be different in ourselves. "We want to work on presenting the world, not to represent it, or explain it." Or more specifically, to take "representation seriously; representation is not a code to be broken or an illusion to be dispelled rather representations are apprehended as performative in themselves; as doings" (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, & Wylie, 2002, p. 438). What is of interest is "how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, particular skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions" (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84).

Within the field of those that might align themselves with Thrift's non-representation (or nearby) there are no doubt differing points of view. In general, non-representational theory envisages the link between two entities as relational and evolving. This idea is of course more widely espoused. For example, Suchet (2002, p. 154) quotes Tamsin Lorraine who references Irigaray's notion of sharing between two subjects, the transformative encounter with each other: "each one continually becomes in the ebb and flow of concrete contact. Because each respects the history and intentionality of the other, each cannot assimilate the other to her or his own history or intentions. This respect provides limits on one's own becoming, and these limits provide the material for further becoming" (Lorraine, 1999, p. 98). An understanding of emergence changes the way that we might understand the self. Emergence means forever being created: "human nature continually *passes into* existence, and it is precisely this incessant emergence that constitutes its expressivity" (Harrison, 2000, p. 501, my emphasis, quoting Giorgio Agamben, 1993, p. 20).

3.3.6.1 Agency

In non-representational theory the nonhuman have agency and most adherents extend this agency to non-living objects. In *Hybrid Geographies* (2002) Sarah Whatmore gives examples of how this agency is distributed amongst participants, and how such distribution is not *even* amongst participants or through space. Her position on the *FutureNatural* is incisive. When she holds that nature and culture are intertwined she is

not saying that they are combined together under the one banner but that each category has dissolved and what we think of as nature and culture have collapsed into a hybrid condition. The wild as in wilderness, has ceased to exist; as what is designated as wild is always caught up in the world of relations between humans and others. She gives specific examples where she charts the material and metaphoric movements of animals used in Roman games, the caiman, elephants and in conflict around genetically modified crops (Whatmore, 2002).

Lesley Instone summarises non-representational theory thus:

(Donna) Haraway argues that representation denies the agency of the Other leaving the representor as the only actor in a one-sided constructivism... In contrast, non-representational theorists argue for a politics of articulation (in both senses of speaking and linking) directing attention to the heterogeneous practices through which natures and cultures are continuously and mutually (re)constituted. Co-construction blurs the boundary between nature and culture and extends agency to non-humans – natural and artificial” (Instone, 2004, p. 133)³¹

What are the consequences of a non-representational perspective in Art? It is common to talk about the contexts of artworks but only as things that give meaning to the art (and this is deeply ingrained). Myin states:

For if vision is not a phenomenon “going on” inside the artist’s head, but rather is a process of give and take with the environment out there, and if the precise form of the interaction shapes the experience, this might give an unprecedented role of importance to the tools the artist uses in forging this interaction. The pencil, the palette, the canvas and its texture, sketches, even the record of preceding works, might all be seen to play an essential and irreplaceable role in the very seeing and creation of something see-able. Indeed, once vision is brought back into the world, the process of creating might be brought back into the world with it (Myin, 2000, p. 50)

At first glance there appears to be nothing controversial about this statement. To talk about context (in the canvas used by the artist, as site specificity, personal history, and the œuvre of an artist) is part of the repertoire of standard art criticism. But are these elements considered as factors, as causes, as things representing explanations? Are the



Figures 3.3.61 and 3.3.62. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Perth road atlas stranding # 2* (July 2005 to February 2006).

³¹ Whilst very influential Donna Haraway is of course not a non-representational geographer.

pencil and the canvas *forms*³² that explain artwork, or should they be considered *agents*? How can differing sets of these agents shape the world by moving outwards from the artwork?

As I puzzle out how non-representational theory applies to or might, say, change my work, I am prompted to reread artist and theorist Barbara Bolt's *Art beyond representation: the performative power of the image* (2004). She asks artists not to forget that their practice is not just a means to an end, or the justification for the business of art one must conduct, but is (via Heidegger) a site of *poiētic* revealing. The image has performative power³³ and in the process of painting, the painting has its own momentum, rhythm and intensity. She describes an example in her practice where the painting erupts and runs away from her. "In the performativity of imaging, life gets into the image" (Bolt, 2004, p. 1). This supports my assertion that the art object is an active participant in an artwork and tailors well with non-representational theory.

3.3.6.2 The practical application of ethics to wildness

Non-representational theory (along with the earlier Actor Network Theory³⁴) has been criticised for levelling out the power of different relations and making it seem as though all agents have equal force of expression. It has been criticised for not providing a prescriptive method and for showing little evidence of situations where human conversations are not dominant (e.g., C. Nash, 2000). One recent attempt to address these issues was *Urban wild things: A cosmopolitical experiment*³⁵, a paper written by Steve Hinchliffe, Matthew Kearnes, Monica Degen and Sarah Whatmore (2005) about water voles in an industrial wasteland on the outskirts of Birmingham. Water voles are rare and becoming rarer in the United Kingdom. The presence of the water vole at an urban site is unusual and its presence has been mobilised in political (about the preservation of the site from development) and scientific discourses (as it is measured and counted). The paper presents the in-progress results of experiments by the authors, both to write non-representational geographies and to recast the wider issues of nature and the nonhuman in urban areas.

They started by learning how to read traces of the vole. Its cryptic lifestyle means it is rarely glimpsed and traces of its footprints, latrines, runs and lawns (feeding areas) were learnt. All the senses of the human participants were involved as they learnt to smell the difference between vole and brown rat dropping. This learning of the water vole changed the way the humans sensed their environment. At times the vole was extremely elusive confounding attempts to use its presence/absence data in political arguments. The authors tried not to write up the water vole along representational lines but to explore

³² (i.e. formalism).

³³ through creative practice, a dynamic material exchange can occur between objects, bodies and images. Imaging, in turn, can produce real material effects in the world. The potential of a mutual reflection between objects, images and bodies, forms the basis for my argument for the deformational and transformative potential of images (Bolt, 2004, p. 8).

³⁴ ANT.

³⁵ The term cosmopolitics comes from the writings of philosopher Isabel Stengers.

all its traces from the way it is inscribed into scientific databases to the way that it was used in conservation battles. The particular site featured is unusual in that the water vole is surviving despite the co-presence of the brown rat (which is considered a significant predator at other sites) and thus contradicted the way that they are normally represented. In this way the water voles start to unravel the neat stories that surround them.

By conversing with the water vole in this multitude of ways the authors lay out a potential framework for weaving together the human, more-than-human, science and politics. In particular their interest is in ecologising the political (rather than politicising the ecological, Latour, 1998, p. 235) – that assists in some small way the extension of the agency of the water vole outwards. The authors admit that their actions do not challenge the permanency of major power structures of human culture (a frequent criticism of the non-representational). Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen and Whatmore conclude that the wild of the water vole “becomes more rather than less real as people learn to engage with them. At the same time, wild things are too disputed, sociable and uncertain to become constant objects upon which a stable urban politics can be constructed” (2005, p. 643).

The project by Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen and Whatmore clearly raises issues of applied ethics. I would like to contrast this with the ethics of artworks in a recent example in *Artforum*. Claire Bishop (2006c) offers critique on collaborative artworks implying that too much weighting was being given to the ethical behaviour of the artist and not enough weighting was being given to aesthetic criteria. Her standpoint is that the quality of the relationship between the artist and the public (particularly in the degree to which the artist had *abdicated responsibility* for an artwork) should not be used as a criterion for judgement. In response Grant Kester contends that her position exposes an uneasiness with political content – or a political content too close to real life -- by mainstream institutions and art critics. If an art project is “activist” in Bishop’s terms then it is “predict-



Figures 3.3.63 and 3.3.64. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Perth road atlas stranding # 2* (July 2005 to February 2006).

able”, “benevolent” and “ineffectual” (Kester, 2006). Kester argues that the detached and deconstructive art that Bishop favours in point of fact demonstrates an implicit ethical position. *The artist is located as gatekeeper* “unveiling or revealing the contingency of systems of meaning that the viewer would otherwise submit to without thinking” (Kester,



Figure 3.3.65 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Perth road atlas stranding # 2.

2006). Kester's position complements the work in non-representational theory to flesh out a relational ethics of being (Whatmore, 2002) or a politics of "imaginative generosity" (Thrift, 2004b).

Part of the reluctance of non-representational geographers to outline a manifesto stems from the indeterminate nature of the theory itself. Nevertheless Thrift's paper, *Summoning Life* (2004b, originally written in 2001), discusses some ways of engaging that may be helpful. In point form

they are: For geographers

- to resist the tendency to "explain" things for others in society to consume (as part of a "legitimised" academic counter-culture³⁶;
- to cultivate a kindness or generosity to the world and create spaces of affective possibility – "spaces of joyful encounters"³⁷;
- to start with the strategy of witnessing;
- to cultivate a pragmatic ethics of the present;
- to cultivate new modes of agency;
- to cultivate a readiness to act³⁸. To make changes now and not to historicize processes; and
- to have a politics of intercession – to be committed to creating as many differences as possible as possibilities for alternative conditions.

The biggest problem with non-representation is that so few people *live* this way. Or more precisely, non-representational theory might be an accurate description of how we live, but most people live without analysing the opacity of their existence and instead hold on the familiarity of their lives³⁹. The ongoing project of listening and interacting with other agents will never be easy but the examples here of Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen and Whatmore (2005) and Thrift (2004b) do point towards attempts to grasp towards a *working* ethical or political "methodology", a politics of the living world. This will not be easy but it would seem wiser to listen more closely rather than give up on listening entirely.



Figure 3.3.66 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*.

³⁶ This reminds me of German philosopher Wolfgang Iser's (1977) surface aestheticisation.

³⁷ Something that connects to the idea of kindness in the work of Lone Twin.

³⁸ *carpe diem*.

³⁹ So few people will give up their efficiency gains, competitive leverage, deliverables, goals, outcomes and key performance drivers: "Our client is a major regionally based utility, positioned for strategic growth and seeking to maximize their business results by driving change through the establishment of high performance teams and establishing a culture of continuous improvement."

3.3.8 Zoo for the species

In 2003 I created the work *Zoo for the Species* at the National Review of Live Art (NRLA) in Midland Western Australia. Along the exterior arches of the mothballed Midland railway workshops seven synchronised speakers hung from the high casement windows. Viewers walked along the 40 metre stretch listening to a combination of ambient walking sounds and found sound, diesel trains, and stories about different animals expressing the emotions of fear, joy, grief, loneliness, fury, shame and love. Most visitors saw the installation at night and moved from pool to pool of light. As they moved they caught snatches of anecdotes interspersed with the more textured sound. Each complete anecdote could be heard at one speaker but the next anecdote would start at another speaker somewhere further down the path. *Zoo for the Species* was part of a group of artworks on the topic *This walking thing* organised as a sub-theme at NRLA.

One of my intentions with the artwork was to address the history of (embodied) physical labour at the site, walking and the nonhuman. Amongst the graffiti inside (which apparently originated during its working life and from when the workforce was abruptly retrenched in 1994) was the violent phrase “DON’T FEED THE NATIVES: SPIECIES BLACKUS SCABBUS” (original spelling – see Figure 3.3.67. Scab in Australian English means non-unionised strikebreaking labour). I wondered whether it would be possible to connect these inner traces with the present day world outside in a way that did not denigrate the workers as “bestial” (as in the graffiti)⁴⁰. At the same time I had been collecting scientific anecdotes about animals expressing emotions. These stories had been recorded by scientists but had found their way into publications other than scientific papers. The books *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* (Masson & McCarthy, 1995) and *The Smile of a Dolphin: Remarkable Accounts of Animal Emotion* (Bekoff, 2000) had caused minor controversy because of the way that “ownership” of the books was contested by animal rights groups and the scientific community. I liked the idea that the anecdotes were on the margins of acceptability. I decided that I would investigate this by walking from seven locations in suburban Perth, in as straight a line as possible, to the Midland workshops. These walks varied from 1 hour to 3 days (returning home each night). The starting points of the walks reflected some connection with the seven emotions. For



Figure 3.3.67 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Detail of workshop graffiti.

⁴⁰ I made a decision to live dangerously and use the names of the long-gone workers as the names of the animals in the anecdotes.



Figure 3.3.68 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Detail of tag board.

example: Love Street, Cloverdale; the Lone Pine Memorial, Greenmount; Fury Oil Company, Bassendean; and the shame-full site of the Bellevue Chemical Fire, Bellevue.

Zoo for the species was rather odd in the context of a live art festival as there was no performance by myself during NRLA. Although my walking was essential to the process and an integral part of the artwork the work was more aligned with installation art than to performance per se: at the festival the walking and listening of the *viewer/audience* was more conspicuous. What was accessible to those people who saw the artwork at Midland was the seven speakers bathed in seven pools of light. They could read the catalogue statement about the work

but of course they did not share my experience of walking the suburbs. There was no display of the pictures that I had taken as I walked. I focused instead on broadening the notion of walking by seeking to sensitise people to the walk that they did from speaker to speaker⁴¹. The feedback that I got was that most but not all viewers consciously registered this, perhaps because they were expecting a performance event. Nevertheless this work was made with the art-of-connection model of the artwork (shown in Figure 1.41) in mind.

Although I acted as a fulcrum in this artwork many different entities were involved. These included traces of the metalworkers and boilermakers whose ID tag board still hung inside the workshop; the animals and scientists in the stories; the animals, plants, weather, roads, paths, tracks and detours that I encountered on my walks; the man masturbating in his front yard; and the off duty policeman who was doing the right thing for neighbourhood watch (and who chased after and waylaid me for walking around the suburbs with a dangerous microphone). I was transformed by these encounters and also by more important things like the hardness and the softness of the road that I travelled and the plants and animals that I encountered. I would like to think that I witnessed these forces as I walked and listened. My intention had been to provide a window so that at least some of these forces were transferred to the components installed at the workshop. It may be that the work could have been more generous in this respect. The animals of the original stories were reactivated as their stories were carried out into the world and there is strong evidence to suggest that these stories transformed the art viewers that

⁴¹ This can be compared to Gregory Pryor's artwork *In Arenosis ad Fluvium Cygnorum [In sandy soil around the Swan River]* where he adopted the persona of a botanist and identified the weeds present on an area of rehabilitated land visible (with binoculars provided) from the performance venue. This work also involved a pre-recorded sound work supplemented with the live sound (via walkie talkie) of the artist on the night. Whilst viewing this work I couldn't help but think how he was conversing with the weeds.

Figure 3.3.69 *Zoo for the Species, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop.* External shot of installation with seven speakers positioned below seven windows lit with fluorescent lights.



Figure 3.3.70 *Zoo for the Species, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop.* Walk from Fury Oil Company, Bassendean.



Figure 3.3.71 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Walk from Love Street, Cloverdale.



Figure 3.3.72 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Walk from Lone Pine Memorial, Greenmount.



chanced upon them⁴². And finally the traces of the workers underlay the whole process of the inspiration, creation and making public of the artwork.

As an artwork *Zoo for the species* tried to create open readings of what might be possible and I would certainly say that it did not 'explain' things for others in society to consume⁴³. *Zoo for the species* was made early in the PhD. It first drew my attention to the domination of representational thinking in art. Representation may encourage contemplation, but in the form of an accommodating passivity (deadness) -- and hence the importance of walking.

Obviously art allows much more latitude when it comes to *making strange* than academic geography and this is why proponents of non-representational theory, when searching for more embodied models, were so heavily influenced by dance, performance art and notions of the performative in the first place⁴⁴. The value of non-representational theory is in how it has allowed me to develop a more nuanced understanding of what strangeness might be. It is not the modernist notion of volcanic rupture but in the application of the unexpected interruption of a shifting and unstable wild thing (of Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen, & Whatmore, 2005). Art has dealt with affect throughout its history to the point of over familiarity, and notions of affect that have been drawn together by the proponents of non-representational theory have invigorated how I see my practice. As we have seen much of art criticism has shied away from the application of ethics in art and it is refreshing to see the new challenges that are developing from within human geography.



Figures 3.3.73 and 3.3.74. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Rubber stranding.

⁴² Possibly the animal's stories *forced themselves* to be written down by the scientists and then turned into a soundtrack by me.

⁴³ A reporter from the West Australian reviewing NRLA wrote "Perth acts included Perdita Phillips' sound installation, dealing with the indecipherable subject matter of animal emotions. It was hard to decipher itself, which seemingly was the point" (N. Smith, 2003) *Ouch!*

⁴⁴ (Some examples include Dewsbury, 2000; C. Nash, 2000; G. Rose, 1999; Szerszynski, Heim, & Waterton, 2003; Thrift, 1997, 2000, 2003a; Thrift, 2003b).

3.3.9 Conclusion

Returning to the strandings in *the walkingcountry* that I discussed earlier (in Section 3.3.2). I can think of them now in terms of agents, forces and transformations. Conversations can be had with the nonhuman by reconfiguring relationships within an artwork (artist, object, audience, environment) in a way that is less representational. For example my positioning of the strandings in *the walkingcountry* in the first case (which on the surface might appear quite callous) actually gave them a new life. As found objects they were destined to be discarded. The objects were physically transformed and made ordinary (to *the walkingcountry*) through wear and decay. The relationship between the things and the animals and plants were ones of accommodation and affordance. The removal of (most of) the strandings from *the walkingcountry* at the end of the project means that they will be brought back into conversations with humans when they become part of further artworks. Rather than being the death of them, the experiences the objects have had have forged new relationships, which will be made again, when they are brought back into the cycle of art making in the studio.

Moving beyond representational models of art is a crucial strategy in non-urban areas because of the pervasiveness presence of the nonhuman. In this section (3.3) of the Exegesis I have briefly mentioned the work of Olly and Suzi as artists working with the nonhuman. Although I have reservations about their approach, it does point to an area of future research. Their work shows a semi-conversational engagement with the nonhuman. Perhaps what their work lacks is a more thoughtful understanding of the issues of agency and ethics (such as that of Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen and Whatmore 2005). An active awareness and practical engagement with ethical issues is necessary.

The oscillating state between strangeness and familiarity that I talked about at the beginning of this section of the Exegesis that happened in *the walkingcountry* was (of course) a factor of “returning to country” a number of times. It was (of course) a factor of knowing and familiarising oneself with the trees and animals and rocks and soils. But it is also an outcome of a landscape in flux and a world full of encounters and forces and confusion that must be lived through. “Living is bewildering, strange, and sometimes wonderful” (E. Probyn, 1996, p. 19). *The walkingcountry* is an ordinary wilderness, a place where one oscillated between the strange and the familiar. To talk of a contemporary non-urban art requires us to re-express this oscillation in new ways. Even the insignificant catchment of *the walkingcountry* (on a continent scale) was bigger and more complicated than I could ever get to know. But it is not there for me to discover, it is already there to be lived. Just when I thought I might be overcome by the size of it all, by the multitude of bodies interacting together, there is the hope of negotiating into existence artworks new and different. There is “an affective realm of ‘wild new imaginaries’ emerging from repertoires of sensation and emotion” (Lorimer, 2005, p. 90).

Can we form a new uncommon sense? Can we produce new sequences of strange and charmed? Can we form new maps of together? (Thrift, 2004b, p. 96).

Figure 3.3.75 *Zoo for the Species, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop.* Walk from Bellevue chemical fire site, Bellevue.



Figure 3.3.76 *Zoo for the Species, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop.* Midland Workshop interior.



Figure 3.3.77 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Walk from Joy Street, Dianella.



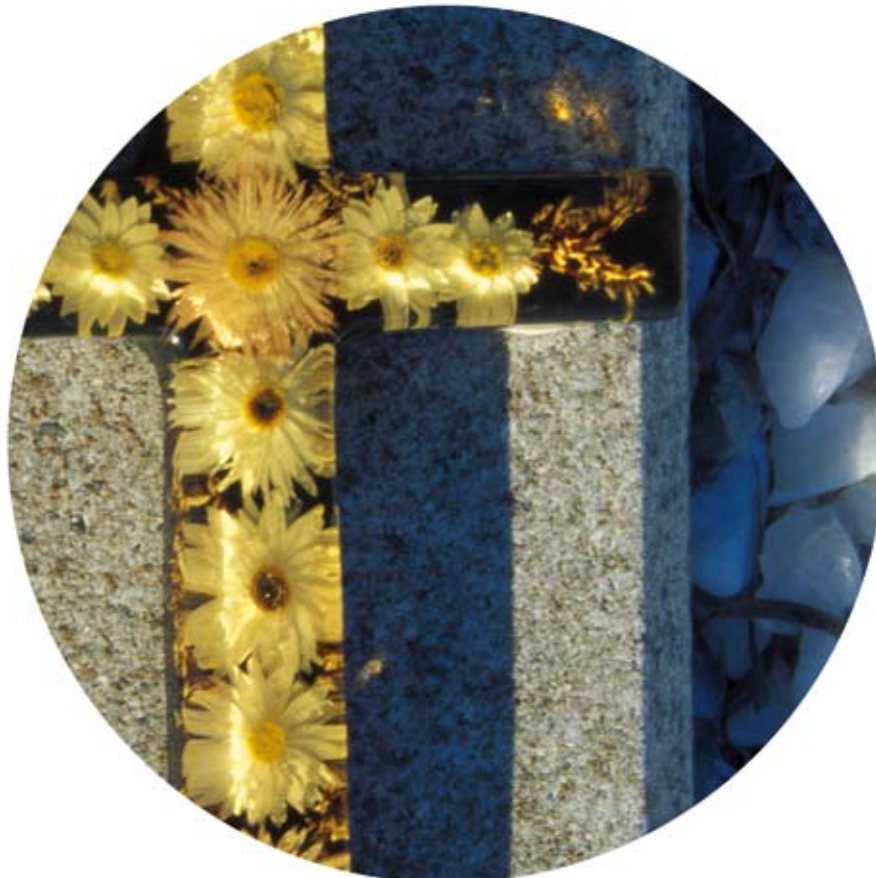
Figure 3.3.78 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Midland Workshop grounds.



Figure 3.3.79 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Walk from PO Box 2062, Warwick.



Figure 3.3.80 *Zoo for the Species*, 2003, National Review of Live Art, Midland Railway Workshop. Walk from Albrecht Fear Real Estate Agency, Swanbourne.



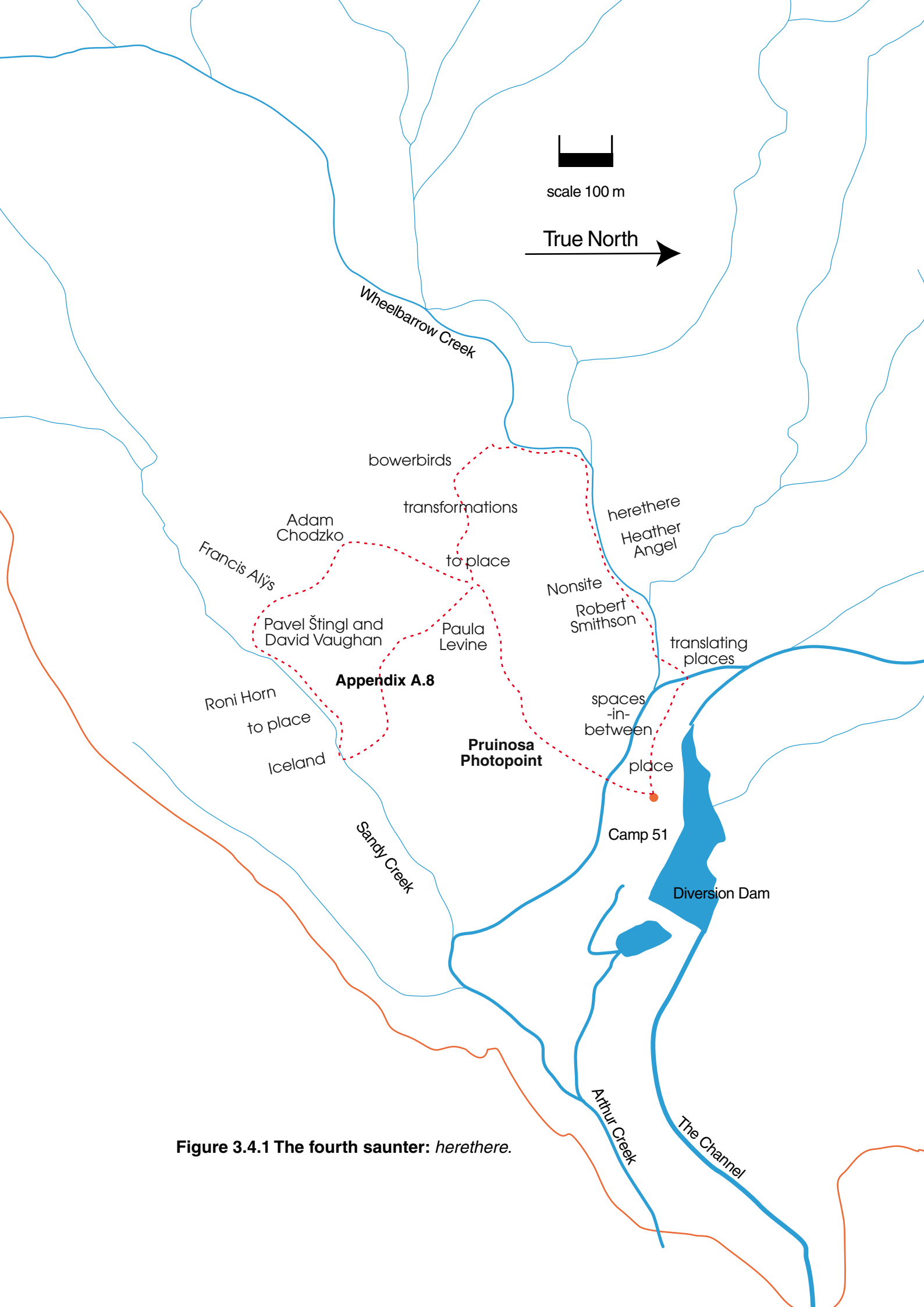


Figure 3.4.1 The fourth saunter: *herethere*.

3.4 Herethere

Section 3.4 explores two aspects of the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project by thinking through a number of artworks. It explores the question, in what way can two places be bridged in a manner that expands on conventional representational models? The motif of the “herethere” is proposed where the here is the gallery, and the there is the field. Two *herethere* artworks from **Semi** (2004) are described. The reader is directed to Appendix A.8 where five differing approaches to the herethere by other artists are briefly outlined in support of the main argument. What connects these seven very disparate artworks is a more transformational relationship between the *here* and the *there*, and the *space in-between*. Section 3.4 discusses how each place is imbricated upon the other and the space in-between is sensitively incorporated.

3.4.1 Place

What does it mean for a work of art to be a place? What then happens to the work of art? Erasure or expansion? Or Both? And what about the place? On what map does the new Hybrid appear? Where might we track it down? (Wagner, 2005, p. 267).



Figure 3.4.2 Fire in the Great Sandy Desert that has burnt as far as the eye can see and generated the cumulus clouds that can be seen in the background. Photo taken from moving Greyhound bus, February 2004.

Through my artistic discussion with *the walkingcountry* described in this Exegesis so far, it is evident that *place* is a dominant concept underlying the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project. To tease apart what might be meant by place and how it is manifest in my work I will begin in this section of the Exegesis with a particular situation which I call the

“herethere”. In the world of the familiar everyday, this is *here*, and *the walkingcountry* is *there*. One is, say, a gallery in Fremantle where my final exhibition is being held, and the other is a place in the Kimberley: here and there. Moreover, what is the significance of the space in between? What is the implication of the road mileage of 3555 kilometres (driven in four days, bussed in 48 hours, or flown in four hours) from Perth to *the walkingcountry*? Pause for a moment in the world of Sandfire Roadhouse halfway between Port Headland and Broome with its diesel fuel prices 20% higher than metropolitan Perth¹.



Figures 3.4.3 and 3.4.4. Sandfire Roadhouse, picture taken by Swiss tourist Erwin Hunziker in 2003 (2003a, 2003b).

3.4.1.1 Translation of places

Is this place significant in the context of the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project? In Sections 3.3.6 and 3.3.7 I discussed the implications of the representational impulse in art and the limitations of representing someone (human or more than human), and of repeatedly re-presenting an issue. Here I wish to investigate re-presenting one place somewhere else. I will begin by considering the historical example of the Non-site. Table 3.3 comes from my Masters Thesis, *Objects in the Field* (1999).

Chronologically, Robert Smithson’s Non-sites were made between 1968 and 1969, between *The Monuments of the Passaic* (Smithson, 1967) and *Spiral Jetty* (1970). His goal was to distinguish between the Site (outdoors) and its manifestation in the gallery (the Non-site). The Non-site artworks used “real” materials and maps (see Figure 1.2) to represent the Site². Smithson’s list of binary terms in Table 3.3 sets out precise oppositional categories that typify the dialectical approach that he took to many theoretical issues in his work and writings. In his quest for abstraction Smithson’s aim was to disconnect realism from representation to create a “new sense of metaphor’ free of natural or realistic expressive content” (*A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites*, Smithson, 1996/1968). The space between becomes “physical metaphorical material devoid of natural meanings and realistic assumptions. Let us say that one goes on a fictitious trip if one decides to go to the site of the *Non-Site*. The ‘trip’ becomes invented, devised, artificial...”

¹ 290 kilometres from Port Hedland and 320 from Broome, Sandfire is the only fuel stop for 610 kilometres. It is said to have been named after the effects of the desert heat.

² i.e. the Site is the signified and the Non-site is the signifier.

(Smithson, 1996/1968). In other words when one stands in the gallery and encounters the Non-site the space in between here and there is a matter-less, conceptual journey. “A full reconciliation of the actual site is possible only in the mind” (Hogue, 2004, p. 55). The Site is seen (negatively) as an absence: “the site is where a piece should be but isn’t” (Smithson, 1979, p. 177).

Table 3.3 Sites, Non-sites and Heather Angel’s wildlife photographic hints

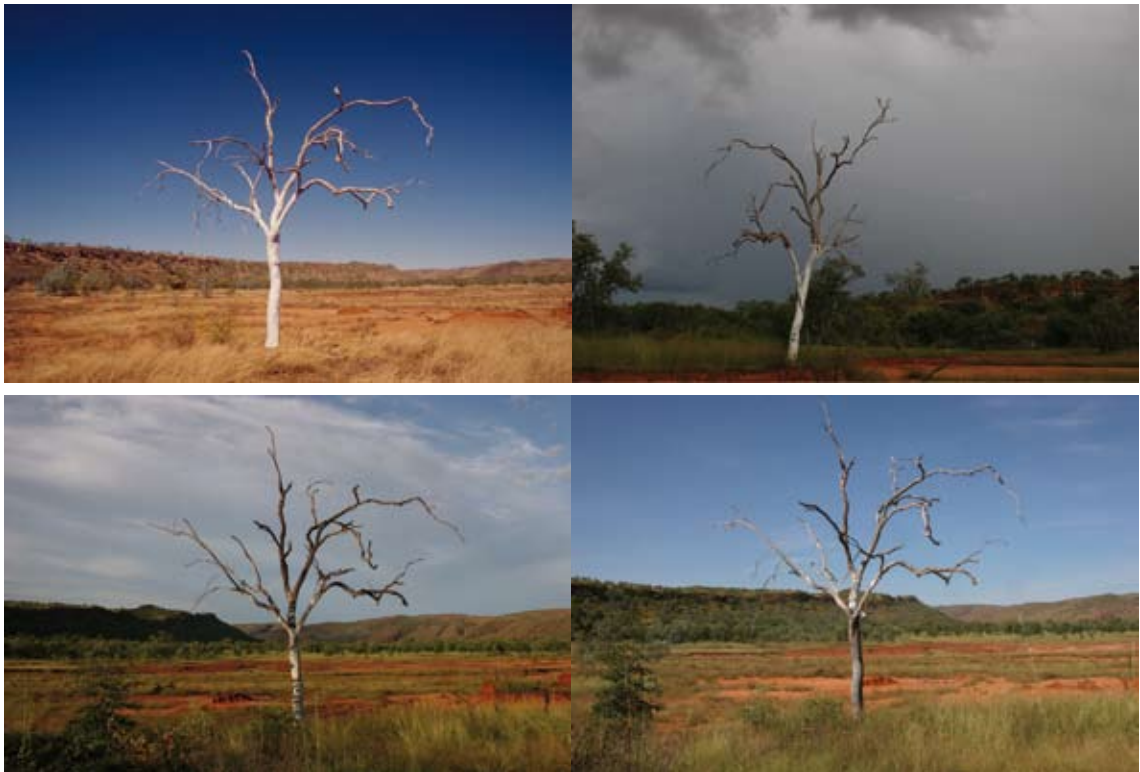
Sites	Non-Sites	Heather Angel’s Wildlife Photographic Hints
Open limits	Closed limits	1. Hold your camera steady and level
A series of points	An array of points	2. Make sure that the subject you are photographing fills a large part of the picture you see through the viewfinder
Outer coordinates	Inner coordinates	3. Pictures come out best if taken on bright days.
Indeterminate certainty	Determinate uncertainty	4. It often gives better results if there is something of particular interest towards the front of the picture
Subtraction	Addition	5. Make sure that branches are not too close to the camera lens
Scattered information	Contained information	6. Sunny, open glades of broadleafed woods will give better results
Reflection	Mirror	7. To give an idea of scale, for example you can include a friend in the scene
Edge	Centre	
Some place (physical)	No place (abstract)	
Many	One	
from Smithson (1979, p. 115)		Heather Angel’s wildlife photographs have appeared in over 700 books including 28 she has written herself (Angel, unknown)

The recurrent use of mirrors in Smithson’s works reflects his preoccupation with a concept and its abstraction: the mirror and its reflection. When I stand in the landscape front of the mirror I see my reflection. There is the subject (me, or a landscape), the mirror and the reflection. Smithson defines the Non-site as the mirror and the Site as its *reflection* (see Table 3.3). In his schema the Non-site is the primary, physically present, mirror. The Site is the evidence thrown back *from the mirror* (and not the central (or primary) subject *being reflected*). The Non-site represents the Site but it can never represent the entirety of the Site. The Non-site signifies the *absence* of the Site through its own *materiality*, and thus whilst it points back to its point of origin (the Site), it does so by denying the “truth” of its materials (in the gallery) to represent the “truth” of the Site. This is the dialectical relationship of the Non-site and Site. The audience stands in front of

the Non-site, their thoughts arrow outwards from the gallery to the Site, but are repelled by the impossible Site back to the Non-site. What is proposed as a dialectic is strangely imbalanced. The Site is denied agency. For Smithson, “the gallery [is] the locus of an inevitable return... No matter where or how far you travelled, the gallery cannot (and should not) be left behind” (Wagner, 2005, p. 267).

Undoubtedly Smithson’s realisation of the imperfection of such a model of *translation* between Site and Non-site influenced his decision to make land art projects at the Site and this stands as a historical precedent for much site-specific art as seen today. There is something alarming however in the way that the Site and the Non-site are seen as dead things, for all their vaunted dialogue. It puzzles me that despite Smithson’s interest in geological time, he seemed to deal with the glass, rocks, soil and wastelands as if they were without material consequence. This is part of his fascination with the negative processes of entropy and decay. It would seem that in the Non-site works, Smithson focused his efforts on the impossibility of conversation.

It is impractical to take viewers to *the walkingcountry*, and, *if one adopts the position of Smithson, the walkingcountry* can never be fully represented. It seems churlish not to state that having to *re-present* (i.e. have a manifestation of the project in Perth) was an insoluble presence in the project, and this is why I was interested in the more nuanced distinction of *presenting* the world described by Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose and Wylie (2002) in Section 3.3.7.



Figures 3.4.5 to 3.4.8. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Perth road atlas stranding # 1 (July 2005 to February 2006).



Figure 3.4.9 Bower of Mr Tip, (a great bowerbird, *Chlamydera nuchalis*) underneath low dense vegetation, July 2004, *the walkingcountry*. Showing south display area and avenue of sticks. North display area is visible through bower. Zones of green glass are visible left and right of entrance. Note fall of light onto display area.

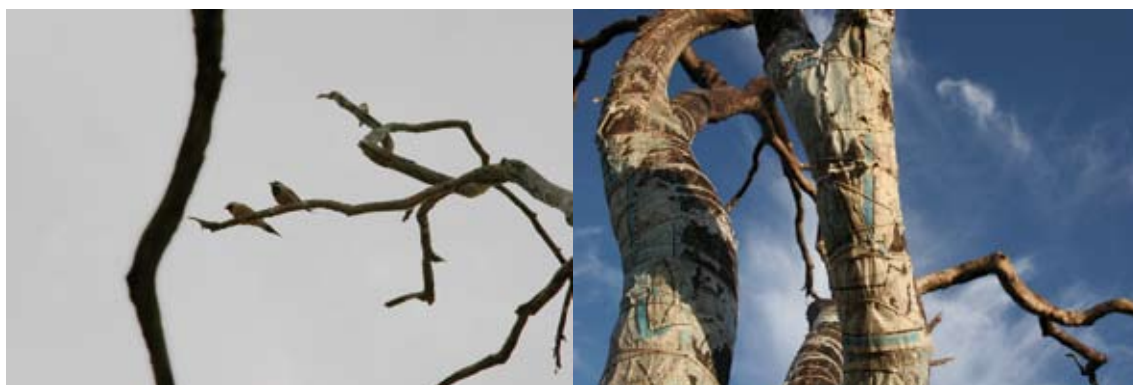


Figure 3.4.10 Detail of display pile, July 2004, *the walkingcountry*.

3.4.2 Herethere

It was with more than a little frustration that I threaded the *here* and the *there* into the **Semi** show in 2004. Dissatisfaction in this case led to a direct approach: the two galleries were labelled at the doorway as you came in with *here* and *there* (see Figure 3.4.12). In the Spectrum Project Space (Beaufort Street, Northbridge) there was a pile of materials that were similar in colour to what the great bowerbird, *Chlamydera nuchalis*, collects. In the Kurb Gallery (William Street, Northbridge, about ten minutes walk away) there was a similar pile. These objects formed the starting points for a sound walk called **herethere**. At the same time in Spectrum there was the installation (also called **herethere**) with a bird hide whose internal wall showed a projection of an uncut looped 52 minute long video of the bower of Sandy.

Figures 3.4.4 and 3.4.5 shows the arrangement of parts in a bower. In the great bowerbird it is characterised by an avenue of tightly woven twigs with the two piles of display material at either end. The bower is not a nest (a common error³). It is where mating takes place. The male makes the bower and collects the objects for display in order to impress females. When a female approaches the bower the male flies down to the display areas at either end and begins to call, dance and pick up objects in his beak. If she is interested she flies down and positions herself in the avenue to watch the male perform. He continues to perform more and more intensely spreading his pink crown feathers and flashing it to the female. At the 49-minute mark of the **herethere** installation, Sandy performs for a female who can be seen crouched in the avenue. The stick avenue is thought to have evolved as a safe place from which the female can watch the male display and may be related to not being attacked by other males or not being mounted until she has made her choice (Borgia, 1995). Males take no part in the nesting and raising of young.



Figures 3.4.11 and 3.4.12. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Perth road atlas stranding # 1* (July 2005 to February 2006).

³ For example, in Elizabeth Grosz's plenary paper, *Vibrations*, at The New Constellations Conference in March 2006 (Grosz, 2006). She may be taking her lead from Deleuze and Guattari's reference to the Tooth billed Cat Bird in *A thousand plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 314) which is also a member of the bowerbird family but also does not use the bower as a nest.



Figure 3.4.13 *Herethere* installation with video projection, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space, 2004.

Bowerbirds do not collect objects indiscriminately (as is sometimes said) and each species has very specific criteria of size, colour, shininess and roundness. The piles in the galleries were comprised of similar shaped things like rocks and small balls of Alfoil. There were small things that had been found on the streets outside the gallery. There were plastic and wooden human things had been painted the right pale greyish colour (although they were probably too long and spiky to pass as the things of *Chlamydera nuchalis*).

The rough (if fanciful) allusion that was made in the *herethere* soundwalk was that the participants listening to the soundtrack walked the streets between the galleries (that were lined with elderly pollarded London plane trees) were the equivalent of the female bowerbird observing the displays of the male bowerbird in the galleries. And by extension the route travelled by bus or plane or car is also the avenue of sticks between Perth and *the walkingcountry*⁴.

Extracts in the soundtrack included facts about the bowerbird, descriptions from bird books, hints for birdwatchers and direct questions to the walker. The *herethere* soundtrack combined the birds as seen by scientists and amateur birdwatchers, with the sounds of the birds themselves. The walker experienced the ambient noises of the streets strolled through. Each of the participants was asked to take material from one

⁴ In June 2005 I placed 18 books between East Fremantle and *the walkingcountry* at truck stops and rest areas and registered these at the bookcrossing website: <http://www.bookcrossing.com/> "bookcrossing n. the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise" ("AskOxford: Some of the New Words in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary", 2004).



Figure 3.4.14 *Herethere* installation with video projection, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space, 2004. Detail of interior of hide with bower bird performance. At a certain point in the 52:52 minute looped movie the male bowerbird performs for a guest. The male is moving on the left hand side of the screen, the guest can be seen silhouetted in the bower.

display pile to the other display pile. This was a marking of the passage between the two venues and also reflects the way male bowerbirds raid other bowers to steal objects⁵.



Figures 3.4.15 and 3.4.16. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Perth road atlas stranding # 1* (July 2005 to February 2006).

⁵ And to destroy the rival's avenue!



Figure 3.4.17 *Herethere* soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. A pair of sound walks between the Kurb Gallery and Spectrum Project Space and back again. Shirts were provided to participants. The large pocket is for the personal CD player.

3.4.3 Transformations

The *herethere* artworks have been summarised here as a means of access into the way that theories of site-specific⁶ have affected my practice. They reflect the way that I am investigating the conversation that the here and the there, *the walkingcountry* and the gallery, are having. Smithson's Site/Non-site dialectic operated at the level of producing an equivalence or translation from one place to another. The art object tries to be faithful to the original meaning (and hence the use of objective knowledge such as the maps). The word translation is often used when artists talk about places. However translation

⁶ Of course the *strandings* and events that I created in *the walkingcountry* are also closely bound up in issues of site specificity.



Figure 3.4.18 *Herethere* installation and soundwalks, **Semi, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004**. Each space had a pile of material made to resemble the bower of the great bowerbird, *Chlamydera nuchalis*.



Figure 3.4.19 *Herethere* installation and soundwalks, **Semi, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004**. Each space had a pile of material made to resemble the bower of the great bowerbird, *Chlamydera nuchalis*. Detail of contents.

often implies faithfulness to the original. To translate is to re-present, but to *transform* is to renegotiate these relationships between places. In the case of the here, the there and the space in between, what I intuit is firstly a folding up of the space in between (and not its erasure) and secondly, an interdigitation or involution of the two places. To make a site-specific work in the gallery in Perth is to let these places converse.



Figure 3.4.20 *Herethere* installation and soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. Participants in the sound walks were asked to pick up something from this pile and to take it with them to the other gallery and put it in the other pile.

3.4.4 To Place

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project has been a process of investigating what kinds of tactics lead to transformation. A number of other artworks that contain elements of the transformation of more than one place are described in Appendix A.8. They vary in media and style but all give clues how one might go about transforming one place onto/into another. The final example, Paula Levine's *San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2003) is but one example of a suite of recent locative mapping projects critically engaging with notions of place, which have in turn been accompanied by a burgeoning field of theoretical investigations into locative media⁷. The growth in locative media in the last 3 years complements recent developments in site specificity from practitioners and theoreticians in the visual and performance arts (e.g., Doherty, 2004; Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2002) which for reasons of space I cannot discuss here. Instead I will complete this section with a few thoughts about place.

Places are about connections. They are a matrix of things and events. In places things (people, tools, plants, rocks, animals) are *brought into relation* by events. These connections might be the wind and the rain or they might be networks of economic and social effects. Places are never preordained (existing before we get there) but become intelligible with use: they are performed. "Places take place in their passing" (Thrift, 1999, p. 310). Places are specific, not because they are fixed, but because of the complexity of connections they contain. No two spaces have exactly the same connections and each place changes like Heraclitus's river.

⁷ For example: whether it is more about annotating physical spaces or whether the artworks are more to record the phenomenological experiences of the subject (e.g., Tuters & Varnelis, 2005); the agency of the technologies involved; issues of access to the technology of mapping, questions of Cartesianism commercialism and militarism (e.g., Sant, 2004); authorship and ownership (e.g., Galloway & Ward, 2005); and languages of how to describe the spaces constructed (e.g., Fleuriot & Dovey, 2005).



Figure 3.4.21 *Herethere* soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. The walks started at the entrance of the galleries.

Like living things places both *move* or change, and have constancies and patterns of persistence⁸. They are lively and messy. Places are a gathering of practices of habit over time (Massey & Thrift, 2003). Familiar places are full of familiar habits. Some habits are more durable than others⁹. A rock moves slower than spinifex. It is in the nature of places for there to be unexpected events. These may be strange events, or they may be our unfulfilled desires that are in excess of the habits of that place: “though places are gatherings that are diagrammed by the various networks of organisations, they are also confluences for all kinds of planes of affect that exceed these networks, even as they are manipulated by them” (Massey & Thrift, 2003, p. 295). For example, we might walk down to the deli every morning to buy the paper, or alternatively we might be running helter skelter down the street to the doctor because we have accidentally cut our hand, or we might be bored with where we live: walking down the street bores us. The familiar, the strange and the unfulfilled are all part of places.

These events outside of habit produce tensions and opportunities. People can work through places to come up with new alternatives. Transformation is about not showing a place as it is, but as it could be. It takes energy to take part in (or perform) places and to engage in change, and since we are in the world (enfleshed with the world) bodily and poly-sensually, our experiences past and present shape how we see it. For example, age, gender, past experiences, cultural background, all affect our experience of places.

⁸ i.e., organisation.

⁹ “The concept of attachment is key for understanding the aesthetics of place” (Haapala, 2005, p. 49).



Figure 3.4.22 Detail of the exhibition showing *dam view* and bower bird stones, *Semi* 2004, Spectrum Project Space.



Figure 3.4.23 View of the *Semi* exhibition showing *dam view* and table for viewing *Ordinary Wilderness: Murmuring Polyphony* 2004, Spectrum Project Space.

Figures 3.4.24 and 3.4.25. Images from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006.* Perth road atlas stranding # 1 (July 2005 to February 2006).



Different agents (people, things) have different abilities to act: rocks talk less than people. The powers of the connections within places and between places are unevenly expressed. Particularly in modern society, external connections between places are compelling and may lead to a flattening of places. Fortunately, places have a material aspect¹⁰. For example, places are as much related through the way that we might drive 3555 kilometres, as through the way that they are linked economically. They are full of unruly things that tell their own stories. There are many different spatial stories in any one place



Figures 3.4.26 and 3.4.27. Images from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006.*

¹⁰ A comparison can be drawn to Rebecca Solnit's literary strategy of writing that is mutable, ambiguous, unstable, site-specific, performative, bodily, sensory, tangible, feminine, complex, impure, contextual, local, specific, contingent, fecund, shifting and immanent "generating what would have once been a contradiction: a spirituality that emphasizes the bodily, the mortal and the material" (Solnit, 2001, p. 58). Solnit mobilises the concept of *substance* to exemplify the art that she admires. It is the way that artists concentrate on the materiality of something and not its form. "Substance suggests that meaning is inherent in the world rather than something that needs to be inscribed upon it, and it proposes meanings that can be read from the world itself..." ((Solnit, 2001, pp. 52-53). *Substance* allows one to interrogate the physical phenomena of an object, its origins and destinations, its interactions with the subject and the far and near beliefs about it.



Figures 3.4.28 to 3.4.36. Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Perth road atlas stranding # 1 (July 2005 to February 2006).



Figure 3.4.37 to 3.4.46. *Herethere* soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. Some images of the streets in between.



Figure 3.4.47 *Herethere* soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. View of installation at the Kurb with bower pile on the window sill.



Figure 3.4.48 View of the *Semi* exhibition showing *Upside down tent* 2004, Kurb Gallery. The Kurb was the "there".



Figure 3.4.49 to 3.4.52. *Herethere* soundwalks, *Semi*, Spectrum Project Space and Kurb Gallery, 2004. Installation at the Kurb.

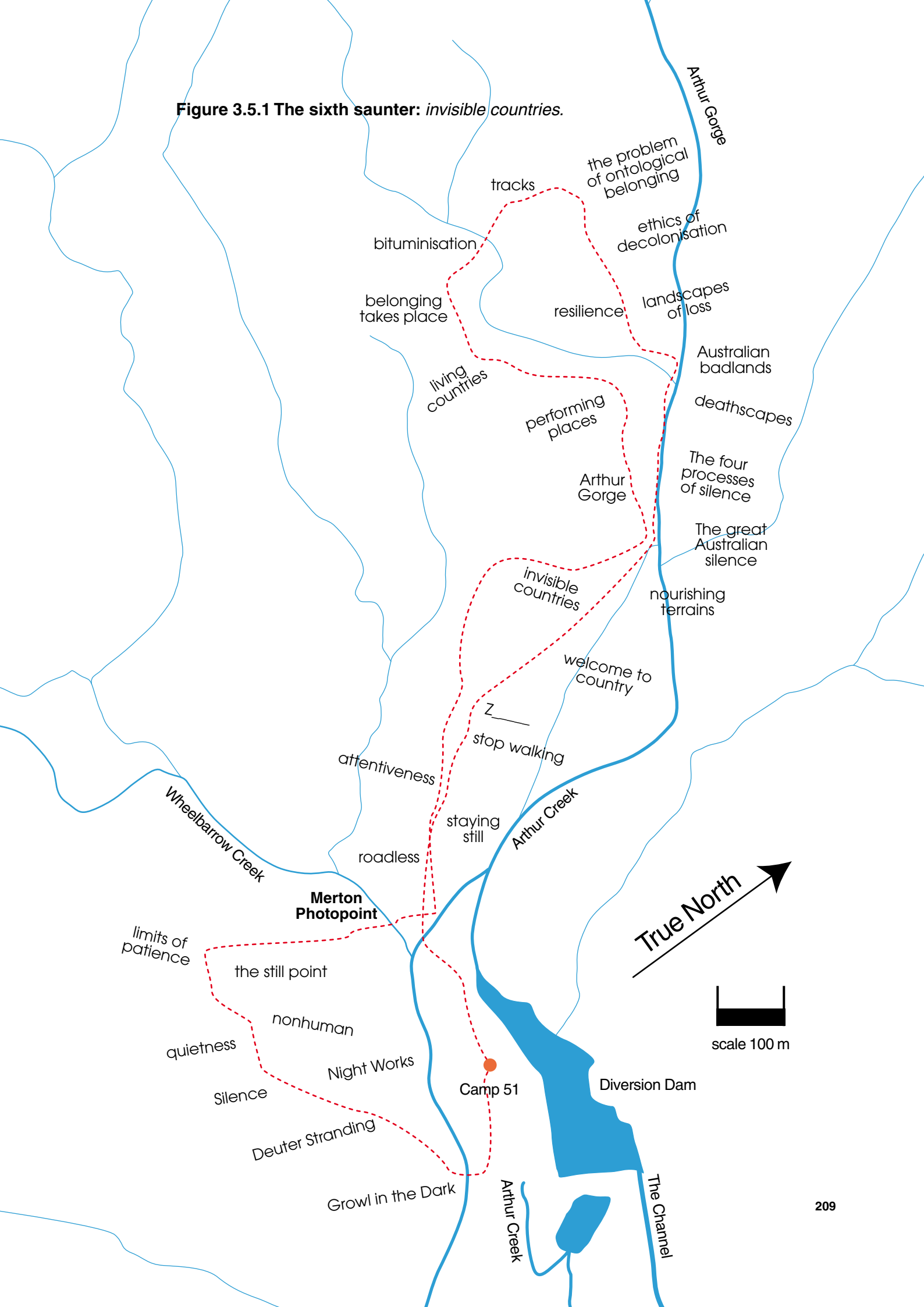
3.4.5 Conclusion

For all the reasons I have outlined above we are fortunate in that we can develop passionate and compassionate encounters with places. We have opportunities to appreciate the agency of others in a condition of situated engagement (Suchet, 2002). The challenge of the *herethere* is to create more transformational relationships between the here and the there, and the space in between. As the examples of artworks have shown, each place is imbricated upon the other. Understanding place in the way that I have outlined helps us to sensitively incorporate the material nature of places, and the space in-between. These matters are further explored through the practical example of the strange strolls exhibition and my work discussed in Appendix A.2.



Figure 3.4.53 Pruinosa Photopoint looking south, February 2004, *the walkingcountry*.

Figure 3.5.1 The sixth saunter: *invisible countries*.



3.5 Invisible Countries

Section 3.5 discusses *the walkingcountry* in terms of silence, stillness and lostness. Four key processes of silence are introduced over the length of the text. In the first half a distinction is made between absolute silence and quietness (or low levels of ambient noise). *The walkingcountry* is quiet but signs of life mean that it is never absolutely silent. In western culture silence is often conflated with lack of communication. Or more particularly, because written and spoken communication are esteemed over other forms of transmission, quiet places are deemed dumb. “Wilderness” areas are silent and methods of expression that are not in written or spoken language are not “heard”. The nonhuman sounds of wind and plants and animals are judged incomprehensible. This is the first process of silence when agents are oppressed and difference is silenced.

A human walking through the bush generates noise and if you wish to see animals you will have more success if you stay silent. There are times when one must stop walking. When you are still you can be attentive to fainter sounds and your awareness can be heightened. This is the second process of silence, the act of listening. A third and less common process of silence is a skilled use of silence as a strategy of resistance.

In the second half of this section I discuss one of the most pressing silences of *the walkingcountry*: the history of Indigenous people in that place. There is an invisible country that I cannot see. It has been many years since local Aboriginal people regularly came to this country. I do not know the specific history of this invisible country in *the walkingcountry* but I can generalise about Indigenous attachment to country. There was violent conquest. The metaphorical and bodily silencing of Aboriginal people is clearly an example of the first (colonial) process of silencing. Such silencing is also bound up with non-Indigenous or Euro-Australia’s preoccupation with landscape and belonging. This search for a fixed, final and complete belonging is like an invisible and impossible country that shadows non-Indigenous Australians. A more constructive tactic is to see belonging as something that *takes place* and that must be acted out in a continuing negotiation. The fourth and final process of silence is to *move from* silence **and** to *take heed* – to hear and to act. The section concludes by proposing that we move forward on an unclear path of speaking with and listening to both the human and nonhuman as we negotiate our fluid places in the world.



Figure 3.5.2 *Deuter stranding, the walkingcountry.* Emplaced in July 2005 (pictured here) and retrieved February 2006.

3.5.1 Invisible countries I

3.5.1.1 Notes from my diary

It's a little bit odd to be walking around on your own in pitch darkness looking for a yellow Deuter backpack that has been hugging a tree for the past six months. It is February, at a time after a sunset when the temperature is a steady 28°C. Mosquitoes froth around the fly net and my hands are the only exposed parts of my skin. Using a headlamp and a night vision scope I am videoing the walk from Camp 51 to *Deuter Stranding*. The walk is down the dirt access track, across Wheelbarrow Creek and about 150 metres to the Southwest. With no moon and a cloudy sky it is extraordinarily difficult to navigate. The air is still and humid. I feel like the prow of a ship collecting trails of spider webs as I blunder over Spinifex clumps. But the reflective patch of the backpack confirms my dead reckoning and my patch of torchlight wobbles towards it. The camera circumnavigates this shape hanging at shoulder-height and it winks from blackness to synthetic reflectiveness. I keep filming. Some unknown large animals are disturbed on the hillside nearby. They must know which rocks make the best drumming noises. Other small insects attracted by the headlamp join the mosquitoes. The fly net barrier is breached and I inhale a multitude of small lives. I decide it is time to go back and I realise not for the first time how difficult it would be if I injured myself -- by falling or getting bitten by a snake -- during my solitary fieldwork. With no filming on the way back I concentrate on listening. I know that freshwater crocodiles are active, and maybe water rats as well. In response to hearing an unexpected splash and yelp and with a momentary touch of fear, the unnamed Wheelbarrow Creek crossing point is christened *Growl In The Dark*. It is an unusually dark night.¹



Figure 3.5.3 *Deuter stranding, (2005) the walkingcountry*. Detail of shoulder.



Figure 3.5.4 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*.

¹ This became the *Nightwalk* (2006) video installation.



Figures 3.5.5 to 3.5.8 Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Deuter stranding* (February 2006, above left) and freshwater crocodile attempts at nest building in Wheelbarrow Creek (February 2006).

3.5.1.2 Night works

The video of the walk to *Deuter Stranding* (titled *Nightwalk 1*) is projected at life size in a blackened room in the gallery space. The audience are given torches to discover other objects in the room. The Deuter, as evidence, hangs tightly in a corner. There are half a dozen large inkjet prints of night scenes taken using the same night vision scope (*night vision 1-7*). They stand out as circles of green detail against the velvety background. The scenes are akin to still life: a pair of boots, a portion of a tent, a compass on a table, a croc's eye in a dam, or a spray of leaves. There is a much smaller night vision film (*Sleepwalker 1*) that contains a loop of the artist dressed in a labcoat "sleepwalking" back and forth in front of the camera.

The principle reasons why I chose to use the night vision scope in the fieldwork/fieldwalking project were because

- of the aesthetic strangeness of the images, because it allowed me to extend the range of senses used in the project (both extending sight and putting me in situations where other novel sense experiences were encountered);
- it allowed me to counterpoint the otherwise transparent use of the camera in the project; and
- the particular unit used comes directly from science – it was borrowed from frog researchers at the University of Western Australia².

² I also acknowledge the military origin of such technology.

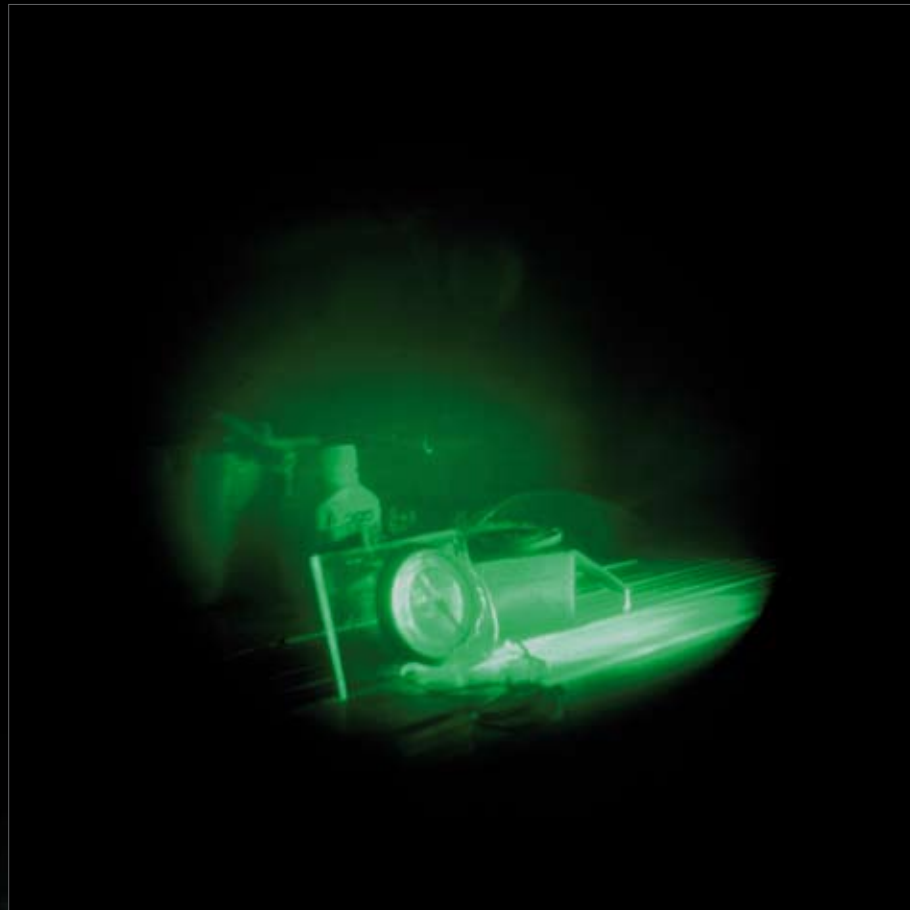


Figure 3.5.9 A work from the *Night vision* series, 2005, *the walkingcountry*.

The intentions of each of the artworks were more varied. *Nightwalk 1* was about portraying the experience of nightwalking in *the walkingcountry*, with its strangeness and anxiety. Despite the jerky movement of the camera (which perhaps makes the camera person over-evident), my intention was to present the surrounding environment as being alive and closing in upon the deep pool of light that is the walker. *Sleepwalker 1* is more problematic in its positioning of the artist as foolish scientist. Some of the *Night vision* prints show the tools of science and fieldwork. Others are more about the view through the lens as fieldwork takes place. All of these night images have a sense of being in a pool of stillness surrounded by enveloping blackness. In Appendix A.2 the nature of *the walkingcountry* soundscape is discussed. This section of the Exegesis considers *the walkingcountry* in terms of silence, stillness and loss.

3.5.1.3 Silence

The sounds that we hear in our ears are vibrations of the air. Vibrations can also be transferred from the ground to the body. Absolute silence does not exist as long as there is a medium of transferral and energy for vibration³. Perceptual silence is a lack of sound within our hearing range or methods of audio recording. As noted previously, *the walkingcountry* is never absolutely silent but the ambient noise level is much lower than in cities⁴. I make a distinction in this case between quietness and silence. In the heat of the Dry Season I have sat in the shade of a tree with not a breath of wind, not a leaf turning. What I initially thought of as silence was a quietness – sound at low levels. And when you stand still and concentrate on listening, what you thought was silence, nevertheless contains life. Ants move. Eventually a leaf falls. A distant bird calls.



Figures 3.5.10 to 3.5.13. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Various tracks -- unknown (above left), wallaby, bird and dingo (above right), wallaby (lower).

Environmentalist Christopher Manes recounts a similar experience at a palm oasis in the Mojave: “Far from being mute, a palm oasis, like all wild places overflows with the conversations of creatures going about the business of living” (Manes, 1994, p. 191). What I initially thought of as silence was, more significantly, sounds beyond my focus of attention. This is made obvious when you replay an electromechanical recording and listen to all the tiny sounds that we remove in a largely unconscious process of

³ “It was at Harvard not quite forty years ago that I went into an anechoic (totally silent) chamber not expecting in that silent room to hear two sounds: one high, my nervous system in operation, one low, my blood in circulation” John Cage interviewed in 1990 (Filreis, 1999). Beyond the sense range of the body there are the vibration of atoms and the reverberations of the Big Bang around the universe.

⁴ This is why mechanical sounds of cars, generators and planes can travel for many kilometres.

discrimination⁵. This discrimination is partly a separation out of what is meaningful or useful in some sort of Gibsonian schema⁶. More notably it is part of each culture's culture of listening. We hear what we learn is important. A number of authors have pointed out the influence of technological change on the soundscape (e.g. Schafer, 1993; Sterne, 2003; E. A. Thompson, 2002) and Manes goes further to connect a changing history of silence with patterns of environmental exploitation, generalising that animistic cultures listened closely to nature and operated on the assumption "that the nonhuman world contains independent, articulate, self-willed subjects who, like humans, communicate their purposes and values" (Manes, 1994, p. 192). The gulf between this understanding of the world and how scientific culture listens to nature is profound. It would seem that in western culture, nature is deemed silent because it does not speak, and more specifically, because it fails to communicate via written and spoken language⁷. What I initially thought of as silence in *the walkingcountry* was partly the result of a reduced expectation of what communication might be. The meaning of silence is thus broadened from literal to more metaphorical interpretations.

According to Wrenford Miller (2000) we are limited by our inability to consider that no-sound might be anything other than non-communication. In western culture metaphorical silence is collapsed down into being the binary opposite of communication. It is the absence of "input" or the omission of "data". In such an orthodoxy, natural areas are metaphorically silent. To *make silent* is a commonly used figure of speech denoting the control and oppression of others by unequal power relations. Miller extends this argument to point out that at the same time dominant cultures look on silence as being "undesirable, unconsidered, and even feared" (W. Miller, 1993, p. 3) and he offers silence in certain situations as a tactical method of bypassing structures of power⁸. What (when I was in *the walkingcountry*) I initially thought of as silence, needs to be liberated from the framework of a strictly binary model of communications. In the same way that John Cage used silence to point out that there is never an empty world, I seek to use the so-called silence of natural areas to challenge the world of the urban listener⁹. In the sound art walk ***To Meander and Back*** the first half contained ambient recordings of each photopoint

5 NB: the minidisk whirrs and the microphone adds the electronic noise as it struggles with a low level of input.

6 Perceptual theorist J J Gibson's theory of *affordances* starts with the assumption that we perceive in order to operate in the environment. What we see is oriented towards action or doing. What we perceive as possibilities for actions are termed affordances (J. J. Gibson, 1966, 1979).

7 Words from an Internet article about the Kimberley:

Whether you tour it, four-wheel-drive it, cruise it, or fly over it, the Kimberley will leave you lost for words.

In the Kimberley, words run out of puff. Faced with the dimensions of the country, full-flavoured adjectives turn pale and limp. How to describe this wild, arid plateau at the northern end of Western Australia, a place half the size of NSW with a population of barely 31,000 that is crossed by only two roads, where the coastline is almost totally inaccessible except from the sea, where the cattle stations are measured by the million hectares, and where the trees come from Africa and the climate from the furnace

Remote, intense, desiccated, surreal in its beauty - the reality of the Kimberley leaves words panting in its wake (Gebicki, July 31, 2005).

8 Whilst I am on the way to making some "repressed" silences speak and to enlarge the category of what voices we hear, I can but acknowledge that things made silent contain in themselves the potential for silence as a method of bypassing structures of power. Regrettably I do not have space to discuss this further.

9 "Let sounds be themselves" John Cage (attributed). Let the silences be themselves.

visited with no narrative other than street directions (see also an expanded consideration of this piece in Appendix A.2). This was a direct attempt at calming the listener, allowing them to enter a more attentive frame of mind and letting places speak for themselves.

3.5.1.4 *The still point*

In the heat of the Dry Season I have sat in the shade of a tree¹⁰ and waited for a gust of wind to make its way over a hill. I can hear it approach and it becomes visible over the brow as it tosses the leaves on trees along a thirty-metre front. These events (that I never managed to film) bring into focus the *surrounding stillness*. This is a distinctive attribute of *the walkingcountry* and of non-urban areas in general. But what exactly are its characteristics? Just as there is no silence wherever there is wind or life, there is always movement no matter how small. Human geographer Patrick McGreevy relates how a group of geographers watched the Larry Gottheim film *Fog Line*. Filmed from a static vantage point it shows an image of a tree in a fog filled paddock with a telegraph line bisecting the image:

During the first few minutes of the film, it seemed we were looking at a photograph. Then many people began to get restless; some started talking. Eventually several got up, complaining, and left. The rest of us grew gradually more quiet and simply stared at the screen – wondering what Gottheim could possibly have in mind. About half way through the film I began to notice slight movement among the leafy limbs of the tree. I remembered this was a film, not a photograph. This encouraged me to attend more closely, and slowly more and more movement became perceptible. Finally I could see the tree pulsating, breathing like a lung. This film made me want to go out and stare at trees, and I must admit, it genuinely changed the way I looked at them. I began to see a subtle vitality that I had entirely missed (McGreevy, 2001, pp. 249-250).

Figure 3.5.14 Reproduction of the scene of Larry Gottheim's film *Fog Line* (1970). The camera never moves in this eleven-minute silent film. "Viewers who are not outraged may become very attentive to small movements of limbs and leaves in the slight breeze" (McGreevy, 2001, p. 250).

10 Different tree.

At the limits of patience the watcher discovers tiny movements of the leaves and branches. It is clear that stillness is linked to quietness, but stillness is also a building up of tension with the addition of expectation. It is the inhalation that precedes the exhalation. It is the stillness that precedes recognition, and in a strange way parallels the moment at which you are about to be hit by the force of the artwork¹¹. Each field trip to *the walkingcountry* I attempted to film the photopoint Merton from first light to civil twilight. On most visits I compressed an entire day, a few seconds at a time, into 6 minutes. Like you would expect, subtle movements are emphasised: shadows arc across the creekbed and the trees shiver in the occasional breeze.

3.5.1.5 Roadless

There is only one human made track through *the walkingcountry*. Moving through this country involves pushing one's way through grass, climbing over Spinifex or up cliffs or placing one's feet in and around stones and rock surfaces. One does not stroll as in the city – one bushwalks. Unless you are a skilled hunter, walking generates noise. The wallabies tense motionless before fleeing. I have many blurry photographs of animals running away from me (see Figure 3.5.16). In this case you are a threat within their Umwelt¹². But if you are not in their Umwelt then you are not visible. They will move on into activity again. So if you stand still and if you are quiet you can blend in. The longer you are still, the more likely you are to see animals¹³.

To be still is to provide an opportunity to be attentive to your surroundings. This involves a focusing on the present and being receptive to the nonhuman. "Attentiveness entails the transformation of everyday consciousness into an unpossessive almost aesthetic mode of contemplation in which we surrender ourselves to that which has won our attention and begin to free ourselves from the selfishness of everyday-consciousness" (McGreevy, 2001, p. 220)¹⁴. "To listen with attentiveness is to take the first step in witnessing" (Rose, 2004, p. 30). In a phenomenological sense, attentiveness is a return to the initial moments in the sensing the world (particularly in a Husserlian sense), as well as a sensitisation to our connections *with* the world (following Merleau-Ponty). Suchet (2002, pp. 154-155) mobilises the Irigarayan concept of listening and the gift of silence as the basis for a transformative encounter:

¹¹ "that accident which pricks, bruises me" (Barthes, 1981, p. 26).

¹² See Uexküll (1957/1928, 1985/1909).

¹³ The landscape is not teaming with filmic incidents. It is not the same as a nature documentary narrated by David Attenborough.

¹⁴ My understanding on attentiveness is influenced by phenomenological approaches (e.g. see Steinbock, 2004) and although there are clear parallels for what I am defining as attentiveness in religious beliefs, mine resides in the everyday: in Buddhism sati, or right mindfulness, is sometimes translated as attentiveness. For Catholic philosopher Simone Weil "...attentiveness always comprises a proper interest and thus the joy of knowing the other, it finally leads to an enrichment of both, knowledge and the proper being. Hence, concentrating on something which exists outside the proper being is closely linked to fulfilment. This enrichment is achieved by the liberation of thinking which means an emptying of the mind and a waiting for the desired cognition to come to who pays attentiveness. There is also the need of openness for what is coming. Thus, attentiveness requires getting involved in the other and taking the rhythm of the other" (Rehm, 2006, p. 1).

Listening... not on the basis of what I know, I feel, I already am, nor in terms of what the world and language already are, thus in a formalistic manner ...I am listening to you rather as the revelation of a truth that has yet to manifest itself – yours and that of the world revealed through you and by you. I give you silence in which your future – and perhaps my own ...may emerge and lay its foundations ...This silence is a space-time offered to you with no a priori, on pre-established truth or ritual ...It is a silence made possible by the fact that neither I or you are everything, that each of us is limited, masked by the negative, non-hierarchical different -- (Irigaray cited in Lorraine, 1999, p. 106).

Nigel Thrift argues that not all of modern life is directed at getting faster, but indeed practices of slowing down remain just as ubiquitous¹⁵. In contemplation and meditation, and certain forms of dance and body healing and awareness practices, there is a stretching out of the moment by “paying attention to it. They expand, if you like, the ‘size’ of consciousness, allowing each moment to be more carefully attended to and invested with more of its context” (Thrift, 2001, p. 43). He terms this ambiguous moment of quiet, the still point¹⁶.

There are times when halting the walk allows one to experience the world and make connections with its flesh apparent. It’s December and at 9 o’clock in the morning, it’s over 40°C in the shade. At times I had to learn to stop walking.



Figures 3.5.15 and 3.5.16. Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Tracks in bare scald soil and distant views of macropod.

¹⁵ He argues that it is *not* a reenchantment as these contemplative and meditative practices never ceased to exist (Thrift, 2001).

¹⁶ It is the still point of the dance/not dance:

*At the still point of the turning world.
Neither flesh nor fleshless.
Neither from nor towards.
At the still point, there the dance is.
But neither arrest nor movement.
And do not call it fixity.
Where past and future are gathered.
Neither movement from nor towards.
Neither ascent nor decline.
Except for the point, the still point
There would be no dance,
and there is only the dance*

T.S. Eliot *Burnt Norton (Four Quartets)*.

3.5.2 Invisible countries II

3.5.2.1 Notes from my diary

We are sheltering on the veranda at the Tourist Bureau waiting for the Greyhound Bus in Broome. I am filming the lightning and rain. I meet Z----- who has been drinking with his friends who have also taken shelter. This man is a philosopher (he says) and (through bravado) he works up courage to touch me. He takes something from his belly from the left side. He takes it in his hidden hand and presses it into my hand into my palm and up my forearm, rubbing his sweat and dirt and leaving grimy marks up and down my arm. I am a witchdoctor he says. Listen to the knuckle magic. He is going to be a big law-man one day a legal aid man a translator. He knows three languages. Z----- tries to teach me *gu ry rrrrr*. This is his tribe. The oldest people in the world. I smell beer.

He says, I can stop the rain, and it does.

That's the big rainbow serpent. He scares me but he is gentle. Wants to be a philosopher and he studies Bruce Lee. Comes from Looma? He hasn't been back to Fitzroy Crossing. Community service? He can't be drunk because the police will catch him. Are you going back? No, cos' I want to study at TAFE. When does it start (well into semester)? Next week ...

Bruce Lee Tai Chi Muhammad Ali

K
o
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t
a

T
z
u

he looks a little like Tzu

He flexes his muscles for the camera. I'm in my twenties now. I want to do something. Angry strawberry pink kisses are healing across his shoulder and down his back. My name is Z-----. Black on white flesh. Knuckles clicking, it's spirit stuff. The air temperature goes down in gusts at the edge of tropical storms. My forearm draws back with his sweat and dirt on it.

3.5.2.2 Welcome to the walkingcountry

On my very first day in *the walkingcountry* I packed my cameras and equipment into my backpack (the original Deuter) and walked down the track to the Diversion Dam. I had arranged permission to visit this area from the nearby farming family that owns the leases that cover part of *the walkingcountry*. But otherwise I did not ask any other person or authority for permission to be there. No one “welcomed me to country”. In my wanderings I have lived with the thought that I might have walked over something that I should not have. Although I have picked up some unusual stones, I do not think that they are artefacts. Nor have I found any stone arrangements or anything else that to my untrained eye looked like an Aboriginal trace¹⁷. One day I saw a small cave. I asked myself, is this a sacred place? Should I climb into this cave or should I stay outside? Six months later I scaled up to the cave to find that it was empty. Once I stood on the brow of a small ridge and looked down below where there was a slight rock overhang and then a rich extent of grass fed by a permanent seepage of water. Would this have been an ideal place to camp?¹⁸



Figures 3.5.17 and 3.5.18. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Valley with the cave.

One of the most pressing silences of *the walkingcountry* is the history of Indigenous people. There is a co-existing country that I cannot see: an invisible country. My present understanding of *this* country is framed by silence – non-communication – but Deborah Bird Rose eloquently describes what she terms “nourishing terrains”¹⁹:

¹⁷ In contrast the damming, quarrying, test pits, fence lines, cattle grazing, and feral plants and animals in the walkingcountry can be readily discerned.

¹⁸ Despite the lack of easily observable traces, it is very likely that Arthur Gorge would have been used as a way across the Saw Ranges, and the remnant rainforest in the gorge and long-lasting pools of water would have been favoured resources.

¹⁹ The Australian continent is criss-crossed with the tracks of the Dreamings: walking, slithering, crawling, flying, chasing, hunting, weeping, dying, giving birth. Performing rituals, distributing the plants, making the landforms and water, establishing things in their own places, making the relationships between one place and another. Leaving parts or essences of themselves, looking back in sorrow; and still travelling, changing languages, changing songs, changing skins. They were changing shape from animal to human and back to animal and human again, becoming ancestral to particular animals and particular humans. Through their creative actions they demarcated a whole world of difference and a whole world of relationships which cross-cut differences” (Rose, 1996, p. 35).



Figures 3.5.19 to 3.5.22. Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. An ideal place to camp (with an (unfinished) stranded leather work).

Country is multi-dimensional – it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water, and air” (1996, p. 8). Knowledge – local, detailed, tested through time – is the basis for being in country. Aboriginal people take notice of their country, and through the attention they give to country, their communication becomes two-way. Communication is based on the ability to understand what is happening and where it is happening (1996, p. 13).

Never when I was in *the walkingcountry* did I have a spiritual experience of the country talking to me, but I would say that it communicated to me in ways much more mundane (a secular/scientific attentiveness). I do believe however that *the walkingcountry* communicates to Aboriginal people who hold to the country in the way that Rose describes²⁰. However it is also not atypical in that as alienated land it is most probably never visited for cultural purposes by Aborigines today, and certainly not to my

²⁰ Warman artist Queenie McKenzie talks about painting the country: I like a do (sic) country. What you know country. And where you go to Sunday road, somewhere walkabout, you look hill like that. You take notice. “Ah! I can draw this,” you say. You go back la camp. You camp might be that day. That morning you get up, just get your paint and run that hill where he sit down. I got to run `em that Bow River hill yet. I’m going for that I tell you (Ryan, 1993, pp. 43-44).

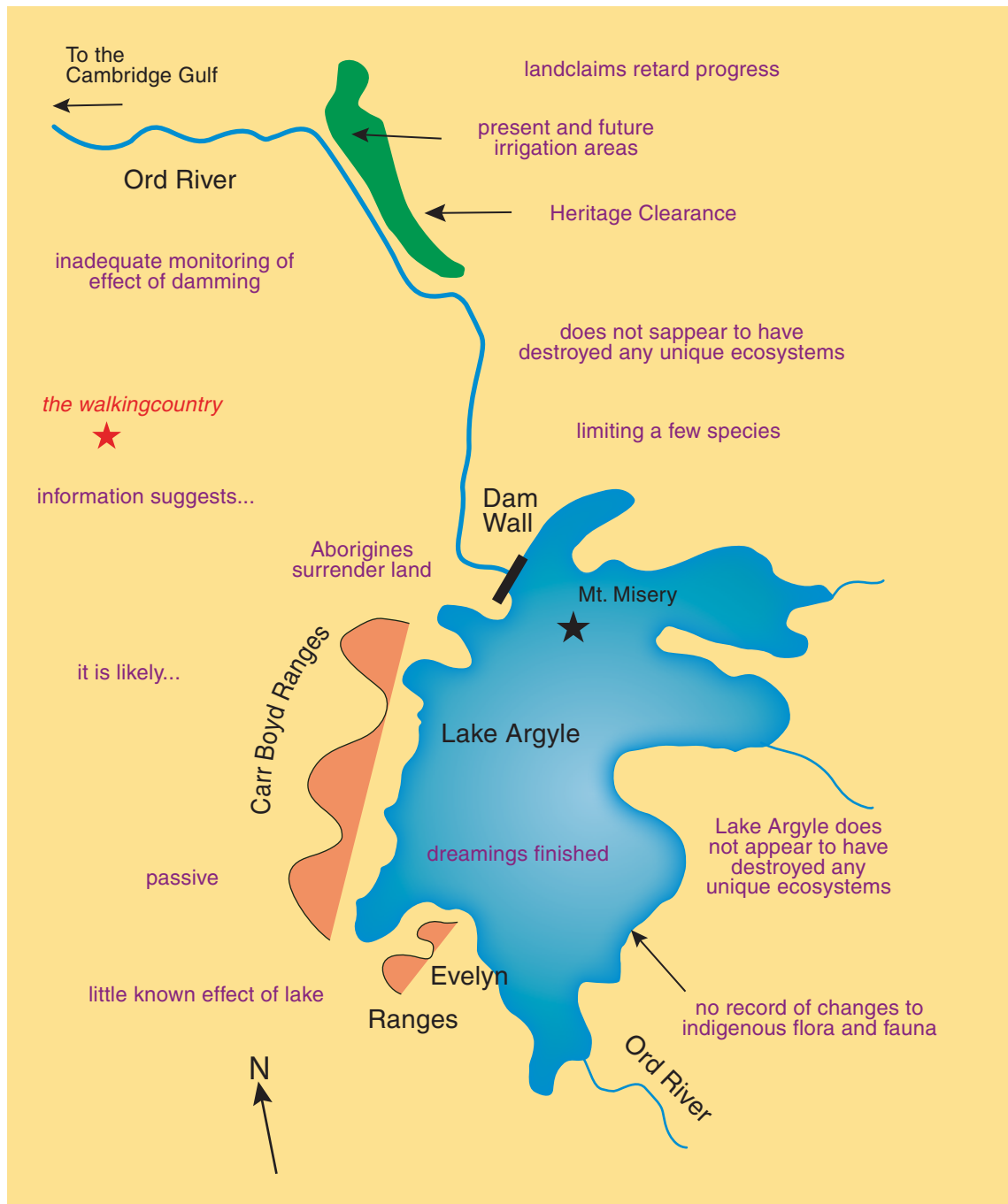


Figure 3.5.23 The “Indigenous” World of the Lake Argyle development project (Adapted from Arthur, 2002, p. 196).

knowledge during my time there in the field²¹.

²¹ The main southern tract of *the walkingcountry*, the Wheelbarrow Creek valley, is unalienated crown land. The Diversion Dam and Arthur Gorge are on a special lease for irrigation purposes. With its constricted geography, reaching *the walkingcountry* requires you to obtain the permission of the farming family to use the access track to the Diversion Dam that is also on their lease. The leaseholders firmly control access to their land. Otherwise you must walk over the hills to the East or the across the rugged Saw Ranges of the South and West, or trespass through fenced paddocks from the North.

Figures 3.5.24 and 3.5.25 Griffith Taylor's depictions of "Empty Australia" (based on estimated population density) and of much of the arid zone as "useless" for habitation (Taylor, 1946, pp. 390, 391 quoted in Head, 2000, p. 47).

3.5.2.3 *The great Australian silence*

In Section 3.1.3 I introduced Arthur's lexographic maps of the Kimberley (2002). She also describes the way that Aborigines are represented in the tourist literature of the Kimberley as separate from the settlers, sometimes as intermediaries to the non-human world, and most often as dislocated from their lived existence so that their cultural expressions are naturalised: the rock paintings and stone arrangements are the products of "long forgotten" tribes. The country may be filled with culture but it is emptied of people²². This emptying of country is part of the "Great Australian Silence" (see Bel-frage, 1994; Head, 1999). Non-Indigenous people like myself are deaf and blind to this

²² The process of being assigned to the past was against their wishes (Shaw, 1992; Shaw & Sullivan, 1979).



Figures 3.5.26 to 3.5.29. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Tracks in the bare scald country after rain.

invisible country. “White people just came up blind, bumping into everything,” said Anzac Munnganyi, a Bilinara man from Pigeon Hole (Rose, 1996, p. 18). Rose writes

...many Australians have avoided accepting or even attempting to understand, that at the time of their arrival this continent already had been discovered. It was already travelled, known, and named; its places were inscribed in song, dance and design, its histories were told from generation to generation; its physical appearance was the product of specific land management practices; its fertility was the product of human labour that had been invested in the land (1996, p. 18)²³.

In this section of the Exegesis (Section 3.5) I will be discussing four *processes of silence*. I have called them processes to emphasise the way that they take place or are performed into existence. In the first process of silence, Aboriginal people of the Kimberley were physically removed from their country, and were in many instances metaphorically removed as well. The process of metaphorical removal continues today. In all these cases, colonialism is a process of making an invisible country by silencing

²³ I note that Rose is implacably for a negative definition of wildness: wild people (non-Indigenous Australians) make wild country (Rose, 2004) but for the reasons discussed in Section 3.2.4 to 3.2.6 I hold on to a more liberative sense of the wild.

through oppression²⁴. “Each landscape contained other stories, other ways of looking at land which might or might not be known to me, but which I know existed or had existed, probably only a lifetime ago. The knowledge of another understanding of place puts the constructed nature of the occupiers’ understanding of Australia for me into clearer focus” (Arthur, 2002, p. 205)

Table 3.4 The four processes of silence

1	The process of oppression	The silencing of difference through the structures of colonialism, e.g. The Great Australian Silence
2	The process of listening	Being attentive through stillness: to have a conversation with others one must stop filling the world exclusively with our own talk
3	The process of resistance through silence	The skilled use of silence as a form of positive but also possibly fluid or elusive defiance
4	The process of moving from silence	To hear is to <i>take heed</i> – to hear other voices and then to act



Figures 3.5.30 to 3.5.33. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Stranded tent at Photopoint 1 in the bare scald country after rain.

²⁴ This is for me particularly poignant when you think of the centrality of walking to traditional Aboriginal life of which so little is written according to Stephen Muecke (1997). Muecke goes on to write:

Once I tried to teach Patience (his partner) how to walk, the Aboriginal way. I said, “Look, you have to take your shoes off, because with your shoes on your soles are too far away from your ground. Your feet have to skim the surface – no more than a couple of millimetres above the ground. And you have to incline your whole frame a little in advance and as it were to fall slightly forward. Let your body begin to fall (I hold her, we laugh) and then your first foot swings forward on that falling momentum, then the next. So that you are not bringing your feet forward, not lifting them up and putting them down again, not tramping, not marching.... with walking your footfalls are light. Your arms hang from relaxed shoulders, you let them swing with whatever movement the rest of your body induces. You don’t need you’re your arms to walk, you need your legs and the automatic rhythm that legs and trunks induce. You might need your arms to carry something whose weight becomes part of that rhythm...” (Muecke, 1997, pp. 195-196).

3.5.2.3.1 Deathscapes

East Kimberley artists such as Rover Thomas, Paddy Bedford, Peggy Patrick and Queenie McKenzie all made work about massacres including Texas Downs (early 1900s), Mistake Creek (1915) and Bedford Downs (1924)²⁵. Peggy Patrick lost her mother's mother and her brothers and sisters, her mother's father and his brothers and sisters, her mother's older brothers' sisters and baby brother and sister at Mistake Creek (Oliver, 2002)²⁶, and the Kija call the time from the 1890s to 1920s the Killing Times. There has been some disagreement as to exactly how many people were killed. Art curator Judith Ryan controversially states, "it is estimated that about half of the Aboriginal people of the east Kimberley were murdered in the first fifty years of colonisation" (Ryan, 1993, p. 40).

Figure 3.5.34 Peggie Patrick, *Mistake Creek Massacre Boab*, 2004, ochre and clay on canvas (Sherman Galleries, 2005).

Figure 3.5.35 Rover Thomas, *Texas Downs Massacre*, 1985, ochres, vegetable gum on canvas (O'Ferrall, 1989, p. 33).

What relevance do these deaths have to the art of *the walkingcountry*? In *South of the West: postcolonialism and the narrative construction of Australia* Ross Gibson²⁷ details the "...recurrent, almost mesmerized, preoccupation with topography on the part of Europeans who have attempted, over several centuries, to define a non-Aboriginal Australian culture" (R. Gibson, 1992, p. 1) and this is clearly reflected in histories of Australian art (see for example Hughes, 1970; T. Smith, 2002). The preoccupation with landscape is underlain by an almost obsessive desire of Euro-Australians to belong.

²⁵ Other Kimberley massacres: Mowla Bluff (1916) and Forrest River (1926).

²⁶ The same Mistake Creek massacre was the subject of a dispute between Keith Windschuttle and Sir William Dean in 2002 in the (continuing) History Wars.

²⁷ Australian writer, teacher, editor, filmmaker, curator and multimedia producer.

For those who desire a *fixed and stable* sense of belonging, the relationship between settler culture and Indigenous Australia appears crucial. Such a relationship may well be crucial but I view the desire for a *fixed and stable* sense of belonging as the real crux of the issue. The reason why much non-Indigenous art in non-urban areas in the last 20 years is moribund may well be because such a relationship has come to a standstill *because* we desire resolution and finality. In some senses this is a desire for un-live-ness (or un-wildness). Contrast this with the painting of massacres by east Kimberley artists. These paintings are an overt attempt at bringing these murder stories to the present. The consequences of these events are brought *alive* into the present day in a way that non-Indigenous artists can learn from. Furthermore the inability of Euro-Australians to deal with this invisible country of ghosts, is an inability to deal with any otherness in Australian society as a whole.

Figure 3.5.37 **Queenie McKenzie, *Massacre and Rover Thomas Story – Texas Downs Country*, 1996, ochre and clay on canvas (Museum of Victoria, 2004).**

Figure 3.5.34 ***the walking-country sits between Miriwoong and Kija country (based on Horton, 1994).***



Both Ross Gibson and Deborah Bird Rose have written about how the unresolved violence of the past is transferred onto succeeding generations in a more and more distorted form. We might be tempted to identify this, say, with the violence in Aborigine communities, which have been targeted in media reports in the first six months of 2006, but I believe that it applies equally to my perception of the increasing callousness of Australian society at large²⁸. Using the work of German psychologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, Gibson's *Seven versions of an Australian badland* (2002) looks for evidence of parallels between unresolved mourning in post-war Germany and Australia since Federation. The Mitscherlichs believe that unresolved mourning at the individual level can be applied to society at large, and by burying the past, the German culture remains infantile and unresolved²⁹. Following through buried grief in society as a whole will help create a more mature society

²⁸ Also demonstrated in the recent (2006) calls to close down remote Aboriginal communities because they are “economically unviable.”

²⁹ ...when people get trapped like this in narcissism, they crave a world containing no perplexity, no otherness, or uncanniness contradicting a self-affirming world (R. Gibson, 2002, p. 162).

In Australia, the Badlands are places in the landscape where deviance and otherness can be encysted and contained (R. Gibson, 2002). The wrongs of the past can be made resolvable by bundling them up into these spaces where you can either forget about them – or more crucially -- acknowledge the “evil” but guarantee that it is somewhere other than where you are standing³⁰. In the short term, quarantining allows the same behaviours to continue, but the Badlands keep breaking out in traces – “marks, documents, bodies, communities... landscapes” (R. Gibson, 2002, p. 179). It is in the *pursuit* of these traces that the *reasons* for Badlands will disappear and thus, in turn, these ghostly spaces will evaporate.



Figures 3.5.38 and 3.5.39. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Tracks in the bare scald country after rain.

Gibson proposes that fear and denial can be actively dispersed through knowledge of places -- knowing places more fully in their complexities³¹. He advocates knowing places as country, as a living entity, in the sense that it contains the non-human as well as human obligations -- not necessarily in an Aboriginal way but nevertheless learning from Indigenous Australia. He goes on, “I’ve tried to see its landmarks better, to know the physical environment, to understand its vastness, its climatic outbursts and errant ecologies” (R. Gibson, 2002, p. 177). As well as this close analysis of history there are other avenues such as emotional realisation and rituals of acceptance.

³⁰ The guilt of the cosmopolitan urbanites (the sympathetic left wing) is actually safe (Cowlshaw, 2004).

³¹ We cannot hope to take instructions from the deaths and ructions in the Australian past until we understand why some sectors of the Australian populace have continued to need their badlands, their places of disappearance and denial. Which means we need to understand what went wrong during the decades after Federation, when the violence subtending the colony was fearfully and forcefully ignored to the extent that the habit of denial became a national characteristic (R. Gibson, 2002, p. 150).

Deborah Bird Rose also decries the transferral of violence through generations. She terms the amplification of pain through repetition and denial, as “doubling up”. Moreover, because of the expanded holistic notion of country she employs, Rose directly links the environmental crisis to the Australia’s landscapes of loss³². This has direct consequences for environmental art in Australia. I draw from Rose’s comprehensive “ethics of decolonisation” her concept of resilience (which she has in turn *evolved* from the new ecology³³): resilience “acknowledges the force, or desire, of living things to flourish, to be in connection, to find their mutually beneficial patterns, and to restore to the world the power of life which is always in delicate relationship with death” (Rose, 2004, p. 49). In other words, the resilience of Aboriginal communities is that they continue to offer to share their knowledge for the mutual good of people and places. The massacre paintings of the east Kimberley artists are as much about hope, resilience, survival and storytelling, as invasion, death, hardship, betrayal and cruelty. In the case of my experience at the Broome Tourist Bureau (narrated in Section 3.5.2.1) it was Z----- who first approached me because he saw me filming. And he insisted on being filmed.



Figure 3.5.40 to 3.4.43. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Photopoint 1 in the bare scald country after rain.

³² As an aside: of all the **strandings** done in the *walkingcountry*, only the watch, the green velvet ribbon and the Canon lens cap (in the last few hours I was there) really did disappear and this is a fair swap for the rest of the strandings being materially present and even appreciated in the *walkingcountry*.

³³ Ecological resilience is a measure of the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before a system changes its structure.

In *Seven versions of an Australian badland* Gibson spends much time sifting through complicit acts in the histories that he examines. This is part of the close analysis of history he advocates. I hypothesize that what has weakened environmental art in Australia³⁴, is not just that we have made a coherent Badland somewhere else, but also that we do not want to *move on* from searching for a *final and complete* condition of belonging. “Wholeness hunger is itself a part of modernity. And it slips into longing for a world that one can only encounter in dreams” (Rose, 2004, p. 181): an invisible and impossible country shadows us.

Feminist Aboriginal academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson throws up the challenge of accepting Aborigines’ claims of ontological uniqueness in their relationship with country:

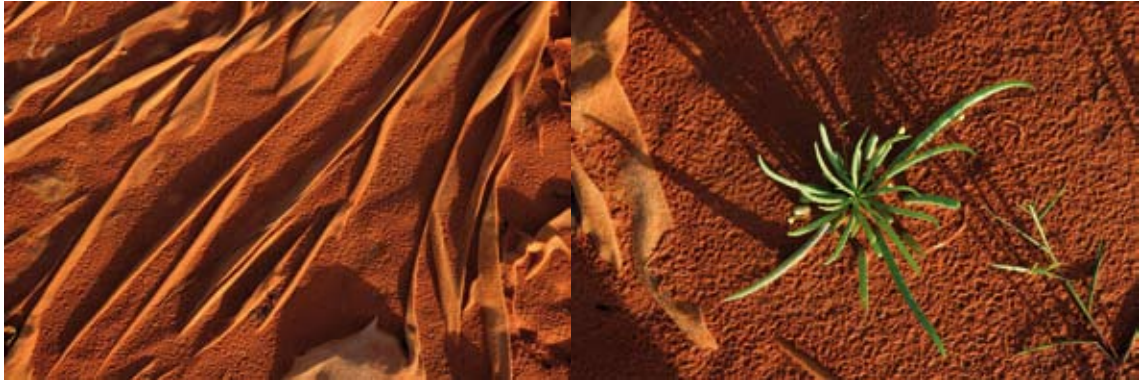
Our ontological relationship to land, the ways that country is constitutive to us, and therefore the inalienable nature of our relation to land, marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-Indigenous. This ontological relation to land constitutes a subject position that we do not share, and which cannot be shared, with the postcolonial subject whose sense of belonging in this place is tied to migrancy (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 31)

But there are problems with this ontological position. In this schema, acceptance of ontological difference situates Aboriginal belonging as an exemplar that non-Indigenous Australians can never attain (L. Miller, 2003). Not only does this confine non-Indigenous Australians to a position of *permanent dis-placement* (“migrancy”), but it may also confine Indigenous people within a hierarchy of blood, and in a historical “stasis”³⁵. Native title legislation, for example, depends upon demonstrating the continuity of traditional practices and proving of local blood descent. In some cases this is helpful, in other cases mobilisation of similar arguments of white belonging have thwarted native title claims³⁶. It is likely that Moreton-Robinson is reacting against the appropriation of indigenism, for example in the environmental movement that is sometimes redolent of noble savage primitivism. Rose states (2004, p. 185), “In general it is neither possible nor desirable to try to mimic their [indigenous] ways of being in Australian environments – both because of the quantitative and qualitative social and environmental changes that are taking place, and because mimicry will fail to get at the deeper meanings”. In what ways can we move on from a position of lack or mimicry?

³⁴ For a recipe for bad environmental art see Appendix A.6.

³⁵ There is a danger in essentialism. I could also be accused of being essentialist about some of the phenomenological claims I have made (e.g. place as performed into existence). What does seem to be ontologically understood is a fundamental vibrating vigorous world made up of forces and encounters (Thrift, 1999).

³⁶ Human geographer Heidi Ellemor argues that in the Yorta Yorta claim, non-Aborigines adopted the language of Aboriginal belonging to the point where the distinctiveness of Aboriginal claims were normalized. Romanticisation occurred as the mainstream non-Indigenous co-opted/mimicked the marginalised and then claimed a position of marginalisation (Ellemor, 2003).



Figures 3.5.44 to 3.5.45. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

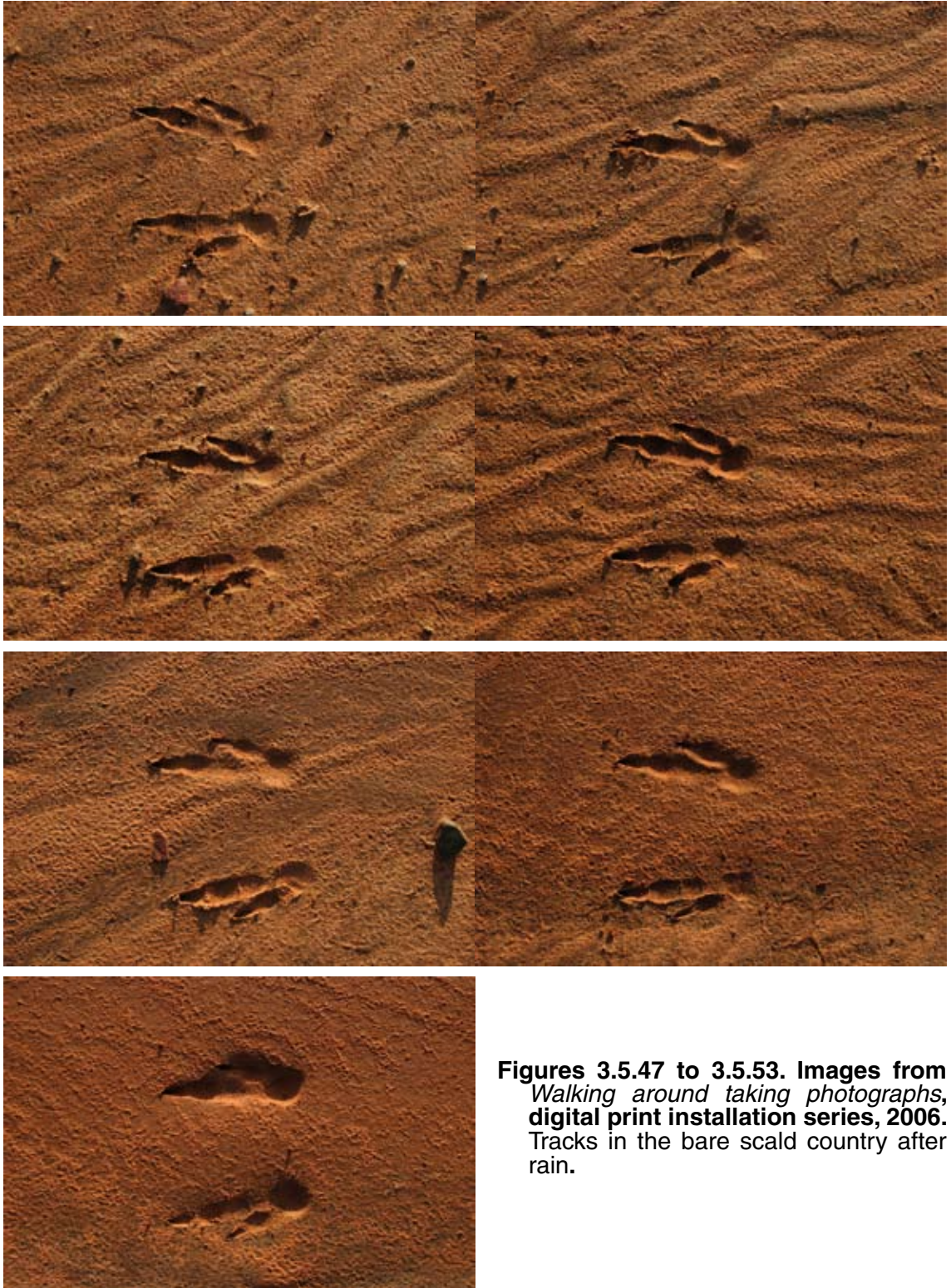
3.5.2.4 Tracks

Figure 3.5.46 *The tracker* (2002) directed by Rolf de Heer.

Australian cultural studies academic Fiona Probyn (2005) examines representations of trackers in Australian films, in particular the central character in Rolf de Heer's film *The Tracker* (2002). She builds a relationship between Muecke's fictocritical text, *No Road* (Muecke, 1997) and *The Tracker*. Muecke's book is a series of fragments built around travelling to and in the Kimberley. The main characters in de Heer's film are "The Fanatic," "The Veteran," "The Follower," and "The Tracker." The Tracker sees an invisible country. The Tracker is a recurrent motif in Australian film³⁷. Recently film writers Felicity Collins and Therese Davies have used the tracker as a sign of a unstabilising of national identity post Mabo (2004). He has privileged knowledge through his ability to see small traces in country. The Tracker has power because he knows something that the non-Indigenous does not, and because he knows country better than a settler ever can.

At first glance this confirms the ontological position of Moreton-Robinson: The Tracker's ontological relationship cannot be shared, but must be acknowledged by the character of The Follower. But on the other hand, settlers consequently have an "ontological connection to the land through their *lack* of knowledge and consequently their/our capacity to and desire to accumulate the knowledge of the Other" (F. Probyn, 2005, p. 6). If taken at this level of sophistication, then the relationship between the settler and the Indigenous (through The Tracker) can be easily *restabilised* by clinging onto this lack, argues Probyn. The gulf between the Settler and the Indigenised is romanticised. Building from Muecke, Probyn calls "bituminisation" the strategy of "mobilisation of colonial myths to 'explain'" the Tracker (F. Probyn, 2005, p. 7). For example, some critics determined David Gulpili's acting to be "natural," and other critics implied that the Tracker's eventual escape was heroic (F. Probyn, 2005). The logical (striated) space of roads, straight lines and possession are reinscribed and The Tracker is *returned to nature*.

³⁷ The tracker is variously read as a trickster, someone powerless, a complicit companion, a triumphant, enigmatic, mysterious or strategic player; or a transgressive element (F. Probyn, 2005). This reminds me of the dingo (Section 3.1.5.3) and the coyote (Section 3.2.3.5).



Figures 3.5.47 to 3.5.53. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Tracks in the bare scald country after rain.

However Probyn's analysis also suggests other ways in which the film avoids romanticisation by being a "No Road" film³⁸. It has the same structure as a Road Movie but the bitumen has been eroded to a track. The Tracker replaces the white male hero as the central character. Instead of speeding through space³⁹, we are slowed down to the

³⁸ Note the use of contemporary paintings by Peter Coade to stand in for the massacres: representations within a representational medium making a more real and impactful statement about the violence than any realist or filmic depiction.

³⁹ Like down Highway One.



Figure 3.5.54 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Found text.

pace of walking. de Heer's film evokes an indefinite space and time "off the road" (F. Probyn, 2005, p. 11). Reflecting the projects of Gibson and Rose, Probyn also asserts that *The Tracker* brings the past back up to the surface. As a subgenre of the Road Movie, the No Road film both resembles and menaces⁴⁰ the legitimacy of the genre itself. Rather than *capturing* the essence of Aboriginal difference, it "exposes the fact that such a thing is impossible" (F. Probyn, 2005, p. 9).

My assessment is that the film is most successful when it points to the limits of the white settler at the same time as it makes clear that The Follower is on a journey where he cannot see the endpoint or the limits of what is going on, but who must continue on with this journey. Belonging is a condition of connecting a person to a place, but it should be seen as something based upon narrative and lived experience, that includes culture but is not fixed. It is a process that *takes place*⁴¹.

Part of what it is to belong is to understand ourselves as embodied subjects whose personhood entails a narrative unity, the structure of which can support an *inherent dialectic between emplacement and displacement* (L. Miller, 2003, p. 414, my italics).

Even in terms of wonder (i.e., Sections 3.2 and 3.3) "we find ourselves already in the world and in no need of *finding* some way of relating to it, to come into coordination with it, to make contact with it" (Malpas, 2005, p. 3, my emphasis).

⁴⁰ Via a reading of Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence (F. Probyn, 2005).

⁴¹ See Roni Horn's artworks, *To place*, in Appendix A.8.



Figure 3.5.55 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

3.5.3 Living Countries

As we have seen in the earlier Section 3.5.2.3, the first process of silence is oppression: the silencing of difference through the structures of colonialism. The Great Australian Silence functioned to make colonisation acceptable by silencing Aboriginal voices (Belfrage, 1994; Head, 1999). I do not want to deny the seriousness of the violence but I hope I have also demonstrated counter-strategies of speaking out in the form of the resilience of Aboriginal people. The second process of silence is the act of listening. The example I have given is being attentive through stillness. This attentiveness allows us to communicate in transformative ways. The third and less common process of silence is a skilled use of silence as a strategy of resistance (W. Miller, 1993). And finally, the move *from* silence is to *take heed* — to hear others and to act, and one example of this movement is a mourning that *takes us past* fear and nostalgia. The “emptiness” of Euro-Australian belonging can be evaded by reframing belonging as something that *takes place* and that must be *acted out* in a continuing negotiation.

We have also seen that the path to the future country is not paved and, for me, I can see ahead a variable landscape of transformation. And this is all that I can see. Acceptance of this unclear path, this “No Road”, is challenging. My encounter with Z----- was not easy, with my prejudices — and conflicting emotions of openness, concern, fear and displeasure — leaving it unresolved. Anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw contends that hiding such emotions in piousness closes down choices “...unadmitted disapproval, bafflement or fear can be a powerful barrier to understanding, let alone enjoying difference” (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 158). If we understand non-Indigenous belonging as merely lack then just having a “correct opinion” might be acceptable. My strongest impression from the encounter was Z-----’s yearning to be filmed, his ebullience and desire to engage with a stranger like me. Moving beyond a model of lack is part of actually acknowledging the difficulties involved and the “space of fear and silence” (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 154). Some more complicated tactics might be needed: to “perform place multiply [sic] ... [to] flow from the dynamics of lived experience.... [and to use] methodological practices of co-construction and inclusion” (Instone, 2004, p. 137). That the path ahead is unclear and winding means that the kinds of adventures needed must be flexible and evolving. It involves both hearing and acting, speaking with and listening to, both the human and nonhuman as we negotiate our fluid places in the world.

3.5.4 Conclusion

The conclusion I have reached is that the metaphors of silence and invisibility in this section (3.5) of the Exegesis that I have seen applied to the Kimberley and *the walkingcountry* are more complicated than simple deficiency⁴². They have ended up pointing to opportunities to act and not just to spaces of loss. For geographer John Wylie (2002), to say that the histories of place are laid upon the landscape and not emergent and resonant with the embodied experience of the place, is to rely upon a Cartesian sense of separating experience of a place and its representation. There is deeper potential in “making visible the absent and erased actors in the making of Australian lands – both human and non-human – [that] allows us to think the hitherto unthinkable possibilities of different geographies that celebrate inclusion, difference, multiplicity, dissonance and change” (Instone, 2004, p. 137). Moving forward involves reconsidering the past in the present moment in a way that motivates us to renew country.

Figures 3.5.56 and 3.5.57. Roni Horn, *Pair Field* (1990-1991). Solid copper, solid steel, two groupings of unique forms of equal volume installed in two separate rooms, each group of 18 objects comprising 1 of the paired objects, various dimensions -- ø 25.5 to 38 x 10 - 25.5 cm (**Horn, 2000b, p. 129**)

If the world is an “entanglement of living things” (Anderson, 2005) then the nature of the conversations we have are central. “The concept of living world depends on communication: It requires that one listen as well as speak; it requires an attitude of attentiveness and a degree of respect (Rose, 1996, p. 85). My hope is to extend the limits of how

⁴² Roni Horn states, “there is always the experience that what you cannot see deeply effects what you can see. Like the fact that these pieces, for example, in *Pair Field* are solid... those little objects have a certain and very specific presence... They are not images. So I have a certain way of working that is concerned – not with the invisible, but with the nonvisible; meaning it’s there and you can sense it. The nonvisible is confluent with the visible, it’s the bigger part of the sensible” (Horn, 1997). She makes the distinction between the invisible and the non-visible (see Figures 3.5.56 and 3.5.57).

to communicate into a conversational framework. My plan is to accept the limits of an orthodox model of communication and allow it instead to unfold. Ultimately a mindfulness and clarity about how things are and how the world opens out will develop. Whilst it may not be directly visible in my current artworks, I hope to use as a tool my thoughts in this Exegesis to undertake this journey and clarify this passage for others.

Standing on a hill in *the walkingcountry* I can see Sugarloaf Hill, which is probably called Dalmarraba, and I can see the Dunham River or Nganjuwarrm winding its way to the northeast. In the distance there somewhere is Flying Fox Community. Between the Dunham and *the walkingcountry* the white netting of the aquaculture area is visible and the farm homestead is visible behind the mango and rain trees. The savanna stretches outwards in the foreground and towards the horizon. In the mid-ground the irrigated fields are obscured. On the horizon are the Carr Boyd Ranges. Controlling access onto their lease land is something that the resident farming family strongly uphold and so conditions in *the walkingcountry* will most likely stay as they are. But this landscape unfolding outwards from my hill contains all those more complex elements of Australian society at large. *The walkingcountry* is connected to *out there*. “In a mutually constituted world we are always implicated, never innocent and never apart. There is no outside” (Instone, 2004, p. 135).



Figure 3.5.58 View above Arthur Gorge looking east to the Carr Boyd Ranges, from *the walkingcountry*.

4.0 Thesis Conclusion

4.1 The research question

The research question that forms the basis of this thesis was **in the common ground shared between art and science, what are the connections between fieldwork and walking in the field?** The Thesis as a whole has examined how the two disciplines of science and art cross in the specific area of fieldwork and walking in the natural sciences and in contemporary art. I considered this space shared *in-between* in four ways. Firstly how scientists understand the field and what they identify as their experience of the field¹, i.e. in a scientific way. Secondly I have examined how this “field” is seen through the wider lens of society and how science is thus placed within society, i.e. in a cultural way. Thirdly I focused on a site (in this case a non-urban site in the Kimberley). If a scientific understanding of place was used as a starting point then the specificity of the ecology of one place was important: my artwork came out of an understanding of the environmental issues of a place, i.e., in a specific place. And finally, the space of connection between art and science in this project included the field itself as an *opportunity for change* or a *place of expectation and growth*, i.e. as a metaphorical space. **fieldwork/fieldwalking** was based upon an understanding that the field was a place of imaginative and ethical engagement with the world. It is important to understand that my goal was ultimately to *talk through* issues arising from these “fields” in artworks – both as the process of art *practised* in the field and as presented as distinct “art objects” in the gallery.

The sub-questions of the Thesis set out to test in what ways it was possible to create artworks with certain characteristics. The questions were:

- Is it possible to re-imagine non-urban places that are local, emplaced, and embodied? Within the canon of Australian contemporary art, can a non-urban place be talked about that is not nostalgic?
- Is it possible to have a *conversation* with the nonhuman?



Figures 4.1 and 4.2. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Unidentified animal diggings.

¹ This includes how social scientists have interpreted scientific practices although I have only been able to allude to this indirectly.

- Is it possible to have a such conversation with a field scientist? If it is framed in terms of some sort of exchange then my aim is to add something to the scientific community as well as to be influenced by it.
- Is it possible to successfully transform the experience of “elsewhere” to somewhere (i.e. from the field to the gallery). Where, in the continuum of representation, translation and transformation, does the artwork of the Thesis sit?
- Is it possible to reconcile the “emptiness” of Euro-Australian belonging and its relationship with an Aboriginal past, present and future?

I argued in the Exegesis why and how art might be made that fulfils these conditions. Non-urban art in Australia should be based upon places that are re-imagined as local, emplaced and embodied.



Figure 4.3 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. *The eighteenth bookcrossing* July 2005 to July 2006.

It is important that we carefully separate out what we value from the yearning to return to a past condition: an Eden before “the Fall”. The artworks produced in ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** aimed to be free of a desire to return to a condition of any perceived balance of nature. Avoiding such thinking protects us from paralysis that comes from not being able to turn back the clock. To admit mistakes *and to value certain conditions above others* (e.g., the issue of cane toad invasion in Section 3.1) one must make *more complicated* stories that take into account human and non-human agents in an environment. The artworks should be both more applied and ethical in their operation. The artworks of ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** strive to be free of the domination of a static objective science but grounded in the specificity of places and their ecologies. Artworks like ***Sleepwalking*** and the ***night vision*** series for example sought to account for both the ordinariness and strangeness of experiences in non-urban areas.



Figure 4.4 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. *The eighteenth bookcrossing* July 2005 to July 2006.

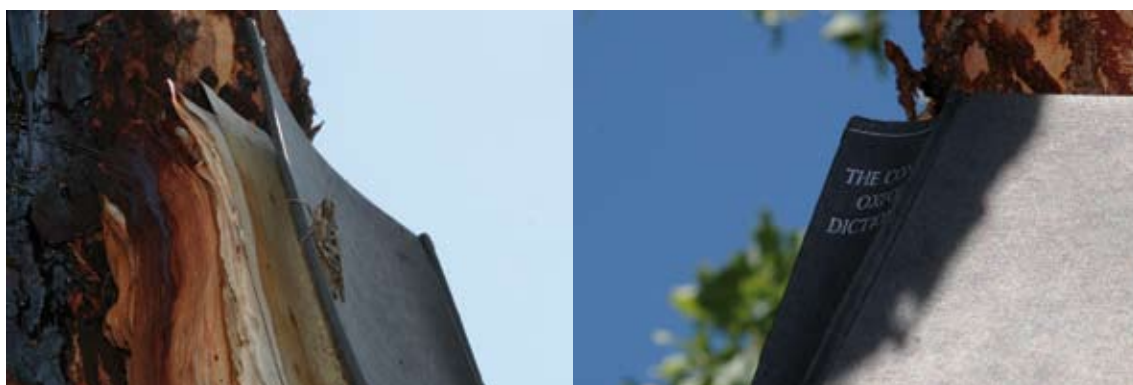
4.2 Major findings

The sub-questions of the Thesis permeate the artworks created and the various sections of the Exegesis so in the following Section 4.2, I have combined them under a number of major findings.

4.2.1 *Fieldwork and fieldwalking that is art and science*

The project was framed around experiences in non-urban areas. The non-urban can offer intense and specific experiences with heightened materiality and direct engagement with nonhuman agents. This was borne out in the fieldwork undertaken in the project. All the fieldwork was done on foot. As part of the project I identified plants and animals and looked at changes in the environment over seasons. I also investigated the aesthetic nature of *the walkingcountry*. Thus the fieldwork (including walking) was both art and natural history. A clear example of this combination of methods can be seen in the second half of the sound art walk ***To Meander and back*** (see Section 3.5 and Appendix A.2) where I describe what I am sensing as I walk. This type of fieldwork closely resembles the ecological and scientific walking categories that I derived from the ideas of Bennett (2005).

At other times when I took out objects to be stranded in the landscape I did so with a focus on sculptural and aesthetic qualities. In the ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** project I continually compared and contrasted the differences between an artist and a scientist in the field. Using both artistic and scientific fieldwork techniques enabled me to develop significant and interesting works of art



Figures 4.5 and 4.6. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *The eighteenth bookcrossing* July 2005 to July 2006.

4.2.2 *Walking as bodily and social practice*

An initial difference between art walking in urban and non-urban areas is that techniques such as psychogeography and the *dérive* (etc.) that are focused around human worlds are less successful. And my dissatisfaction with the walking styles of wilderness walkers such as Fulton and Long prompted me to research the idea of wilderness as opposed to wilderness and the use of wonder as a potent force in my work. In

other words, my walking contained the right mix of discipline and wildness, attention and distraction, investigation and reverie, responsibility and play. Brian Massumi puts it thus:

I like the notion of 'walking as controlled falling'. It's something of a proverb, and Laurie Anderson, among others, has used it. It conveys the sense that freedom, or the ability to move forward and to transit through life, isn't necessarily about escaping from constraints. There are always constraints. When we walk, we're dealing with the constraints of gravity. There's also the constraints of balance, and a need for equilibrium. But, at the same time, to walk you need to throw off the equilibrium, you have to let yourself go into a fall, then you cut it off and regain the balance. You move forward by playing with the constraints, not to avoid them. There's an openness of movement, even though there's no escaping constraints (Brian Massumi interviewed in Zournazi, 2003).

Massumi is alluding to the similarities between walking and operating effectively and ethically in a complex world. This is the additional important reason why walking was central to the project. Its *connection to* the everyday and as ordinary activity allowed me to make *connections between* art and the possibilities for social change. Such *connections* are a vital aspect of environmental art.



Figures 4.7 and 4.8. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. The eighteenth bookcrossing July 2005 to July 2006.

4.2.3 *FutureNatural*

I termed what might happen in the future to a society's understanding of the boundary between culture and nature or the human and the nonhuman (or more-than-human) as the *FutureNatural*. By researching the intersecting space of science and art and specifically through the process of walking in the field I have identified that the *FutureNatural* is a changeable condition. It will be more *living* than *dead*, more appreciative of a wider suite of agents in situations, more appreciative of the connections and interdependencies between the human and nonhuman and less focused on the destructive boundaries of rigid definitions of nature and culture. The *FutureNatural* disturbs both the "objectivity" of science and the notion of the balance of nature held by society in general and by many environmentalists. My work continues to straddle the boundaries between science, environmentalism and critical theory. Scientific facts are not the only criteria for judging environmental debates and the processes and assumptions of science itself also need to be drawn into wider debates about environmental issues. Such an interpretation of the *FutureNatural* overcomes some

of the limitations of both a science that seeks a truth framed by resourcism and a constructivist position that empties nature of its forceful, physical and material dispositions. In *fieldwork/fieldwalking* I used wildness as a motif to re-imagine the boundary between nature and culture as something that is changeable and alive.

4.2.4 Ordinary wilderness

The artworks created in *fieldwork/fieldwalking* contrast with the work of other walking artists such as Hamish Fulton and Richard Long that are frequently based on sublime wilderness experiences. The sublime was not the most common or strongest type of experience in *the walkingcountry*. Much of one's time in the field is involved in pragmatic and bodily encounters. Some of the aesthetic experiences are local and ephemeral. Wildness and the delight of wonder are more appropriate than the fear and awe of the sublime. Based on my experiences I formulated and applied the concept of ordinary wilderness to my work. Ordinary wilderness asks the questions:

- What happens if “wilderness experiences” are mundane?
- What happens if wild things have an autonomy outside of our control?
- What happens if wildness is as much inside us as it is where our rubbish ends up?

I reframed my experience of what is purportedly a wilderness area by highlighting the real physical conditions and the cultural concepts that join it back into the rest of the world. I used scientific processes in this project as a method of approach to places, but because I also wanted to unfix the rigidity of science and highlight wild things, my work departed from the “scientific realm” at that point.

4.2.5 Herethere

A significant issue in *fieldwork/fieldwalking* was how to creatively transform the experience of elsewhere (the field) into artworks in a gallery. One of the successes of the project has been my increasing understanding of a transformative way of relating two places together. In the sound art walk *To Meander and back* the strategy was to fold and imbricate *the walkingcountry*, the gallery in Fremantle, and the space in-between



Figure 4.9 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. Fruit bats at twilight.

together. In other words the places and the space in-between did not disappear or lose their identity but instead were interdigitated like two hands folded together. The artworks in *fieldwork/fieldwalking* have used methods of transformation in preference to strict translations of places. Seeing places as performative and as a matrix of things and events brought into relationship awakens the potential for transforming places and of being transformed by places.

Moving beyond representational models of art is a crucial strategy in non-urban areas because of the pervasive presence of the nonhuman. The **herethere** artworks are part of an ongoing conversational engagement with the nonhuman in my work. A thoughtful understanding of the issues of agency and ethics and an active awareness and practical engagement with ethical issues is necessary.

4.2.6 Conversations

The **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project applied Spencer's (2004) concept of conversational aesthetics to *the walkingcountry*. Occasionally agents in *the walkingcountry* (such as birds) engaged with me with interest but in many cases animals and plants responded with fear or indifference. Nevertheless Spencer's conversational aesthetics allowed me to more fully understand the conversations that I was having in *the walkingcountry* because it recognises the autonomy of other agents in an environment (whose responses can therefore include indifference). To achieve a conversational aesthetic I approached a walk as if it were a conversation. This had the advantage of breaking up the division between the subject and the object, as they are now co-constitutive. The **fieldwork/fieldwalking project** utilised the position that people come into existence through their interaction with the world.

The artworks of the **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project include those that have elements of literal as well as metaphorical conversations with the nonhuman. For example in **Four Tales from Natural History** the Torresian crows are given the opportunity to speak.



Figures 4.10 to 4.13. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Fruit bats at twilight.

Other more metaphorical conversations in artworks included using the stories already written by scientists as anecdotes about animals in ***Zoo for the Species***. These stories were spoken on the soundtrack. But the stories presented more than just representations of animal emotions. Because they are continually repeated through human society and do not die away, the stories give the animals another opportunity for agency. These animals *force* their *vitality* upon us. Deborah Bird Rose believes that living things and ecosystems have their own integrity and “will to flourish”. She states

Our challenge in engaging in new ways of thinking and doing connectivity is to embed the human in the non-human, and to enlarge human conversations so that we may find ways to engage with and learn from the world’s own expressivity and will to flourish (Rose, 2001, p. 11).

An important contribution of ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** has thus been art that endeavours to enlarge the conversations that we have with the world.

Creative conversations were also an important framework for relating to scientists in ***fieldwork/fieldwalking***. In the work ***Four Tales from Natural History*** Thalie Partridge converses with us about her ecological research into the importance of fire in tropical savanna ecosystems. And works in the forthcoming ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** exhibition will also include other conversations with scientists. The idea of an artwork embodying generous and living metaphorical conversation is an important outcome of the project.

4.2.7 Silence, listening and belonging

The work ***To Meander and back*** used silence (or the absence of human words) to redress the balance between the human and the nonhuman. In the Exegesis I identified four different processes of silence which begin with the silencing effect of colonialism and end with the process of moving *from* silence: to hear is to *take heed* – to hear other voices and then to act. This last use of silence has implications for reconciling the “emptiness” of Euro-Australian belonging (and ultimately its relationship with an Aboriginal past, present and future) because it is a listening *then* an acting. Instead of yearning for a nostalgic place in the past that sees Euro-Australians such as myself trapped in a condition of lack and a paralysis, the last process of moving *from* silence, *moves past* into a more complicated ethical position of engaging with the difficult issues of the world.

4.2.8 Contemporary practice

Recently the curator of the 2006 Sydney Biennale Charles Merewether stated of the Australian work included in that event:

There is no doubt that I increasingly saw the issue of landscape and territory as a recurrent and urgent issue if not thread running across work that I respected... (there was) a cluster of approaches that intersect, overlap and diverge around their artistic approach towards issues concerning landscape and the mapping and naming of place and landscape in Australia (“Interview: Charles Merewether”, 2006, p. 75).



Figures 4.14 to 4.19. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. The time of water in one valley in the Saw Range.

It could be said that such work follows a long tradition of landscape painting in Australian art history. However, Merewether is suggesting that these works, by offering *multiple* perspectives on land and cultures, are closely tied to a global contemporary art with its agenda of investigating the world we live in (with its imbricated cultures). This investigation can be both appreciative and critical. The ***fieldwork/fieldwalking*** project has dealt with similar issues and is thus connected with wider concerns in contemporary art.

4.2.9 Boundaries of an artwork expanded

fieldwork/fieldwalking took a particular position with respect to the relationship between the artist, the audience, the environment and the material art object, arguing that they are of equal importance. The artworks produced in the project were part of an expanded understanding of what an artwork might be. The visits to the field site involved time engaging in recognisably artistic or scientific activities as well as time doing ordinary things. Being there and walking around was performing *the walkingcountry* and therefore formed part of a total artwork of the place. I continue to make eclogues (artworks as events that are photographed and recorded mentioned in Section 1.0). The strandings in *the walkingcountry* are another form of these eclogues.

4.3 Further works

The *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project has opened up a number of future directions in my work. Three examples are listed below.

- In the planning for this project I considered whether it might be possible to develop a collaborative project with a professional scientist under the auspices of the University. Whilst this did not eventuate the research process allowed me to clarify what I might want out of such an experience. Attending the *New constellations: Art, science and society* in Sydney in 2006 and seeing at first hand the *AudioNomad* collaboration between Nigel Helyer and the University of New South Wales (see Appendix A.2) has given me further impetus to pursue this area in the future. Furthermore I have re-valued my own professional abilities as a result of the work achieved in *the walkingcountry* and no doubt further artworks will develop from these learnings.
- The second potential project proposed early in the research process was the possibility of developing a Geographical Information System of *the walkingcountry*. This did not proceed as access to expertise and proprietary software was at that time unavailable or prohibitively expensive. However, since starting the project in 2003, significant advances have been made in locative media with open source software (as of 2006) now freely available via the Internet. This project is now eminently achievable. Many challenging artworks are currently being made in this area and it is a potential area for my future practice.
- Unfinished work not reported in the Exegesis includes my interactions with male bowerbirds and the contents of their bowers. I had been attempting to offer extra stones and found objects to the bowerbirds. I had begun experimenting with how far objects will be carried to the bower and how frequently objects are transferred between bowers. Some objects have been successfully integrated and other objects were indignantly ejected from the display area. I also learnt how selective the bowerbird can be. My plans for providing shiny new aluminium tags with text inscribed upon them came to nought when I discovered that the aluminium must be matt and dull in texture or else it is ignored. If it had worked then new spatial

texts would have been formed as the bird arranged them at the bower. As these interactions can only be undertaken from August to December when the bowers are active, further conversations with bowerbirds will have to wait until the next time I am in the Kimberley.



Figures 4.20 to 4.22. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006 Bower details showing metal tag in lower shot.



At this stage too I have not completely answered the sub-question: *how my art might add something to the scientific community*. There is unexplored potential in divining exactly what might constitute adding something back into the scientific community. In the last three years, the works that I have made have not achieved wide enough circulation for me to say that they have been influential within the scientific community and, despite my continuing research into art and science interaction, I have yet to resolve this question to my satisfaction. Nevertheless I have, for example, data gathered from 29 respondents to a short survey of field scientists. I have not been able yet to integrate into this into the current series of artworks but I am determined to return to this area of practice in the future.



Figure 4.23 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

4.4 To make tracks

To conclude, my aim in *fieldwork/fieldwalking* was to make art about walking and scientific fieldwork. Even as it nears completion the project has opened up a number of possible avenues for future work in these areas. There has also been a considerable shift in my position. I now believe being open to the world is the real meaning of coming to terms with invisible countries. And part of being open is taking action in an ethically complex world. Through its diversity the world is yet full of emancipatory spaces “left empty for encounters which may contain the potential to unfold things otherwise...” (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, & Wylie, 2002, p. 438). *The walkingcountry* has changed my art and as I leave it I know that its conversations will always be with me. Looking back it seemed as though I was searching for a “fieldology” – an *eager science* of moving through space seeking wonder and everyday experience in equal quantities.



Figure 4.24 Linnaeus Tired Out after a Day in the Field. Found reproduction of a painting by B.D. Jackson.

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Appendices

A.1 What is the scientific field? An exordium

Go, my Sons, buy stout shoes, climb the mountains, search ...the deep recesses of the earth... in this way and in no others will you arrive at a knowledge of nature and the properties of things *Severinus 7th C AD* (Margenau & Bergamini, 1966, p. 82).

The field is a space that is coded, regulated, and defined as objective by science. In this sense it is no different from where data or samples are processed or analysed (in the office or the laboratory). What then is the difference between the field and the laboratory? The laboratory is a built environment constructed for science work to take place. The field comes into existence as a “site” when the performance of fieldwork takes place. Fieldwork is the science that takes place “out there”. But what does “there” mean? Depending upon the field of research, the field could be in areas where nature is little disturbed (natural sciences), in rural areas, in urban ecosystems or amongst human communities (social sciences and anthropology). Kuklick and Kohler define scientific fieldwork as “enterprises conducted at least partially out of doors, in uncontrolled settings” (1996, p. 1). There is obviously a specificity in where fieldwork takes place, but how do we characterise the enormous number of specialised disciplines that interact with the field¹? Despite the variability of field workers and field tasks, four basic kinds of activities take place in the field. These are:

- Initial explorations of a place with their emphasis on observation, description and classification;
- Monitoring and learning from changes in factors in the environment over time and through space;
- Using the field as a place of experimentation to answer questions by manipulating or introducing new variables; or
- Managing a place by altering variables to get to predetermined outcomes.

The details of these kinds of general activities are not only specified by the discipline that is being followed, but influenced by the specific nature of the local environment. Basic phenomena such as weather, the lie of the land, vegetation or animals cannot be avoided. The physical characteristics of the field are therefore always central to field, and is a significant affective influence on the nature of the researches conducted, the experience of the individual, and the beliefs that surround the field.

A further spatial aspect of the field is its distance from the metropolis. All fieldwork begins with the journey. The journey (of whatever magnitude) of going and returning from the field is an important aspect of the process. The opposite of the field is not only the laboratory but also the home. The commonsense beliefs and values of the home are unavoidably taken into the field. The field tent is a re-creation of aspects of home. The predicament of anthropology in the 1980s was how to represent the experience of fieldwork and how to situate the subject in the field. Subsequent to this, re-exploration of the home has led to the concept of multi-sited fieldwork and this has further redefined the field

¹ Agronomy, anthropology, astronomy, biogeography, botany, cartography, ecology, ethology, exploration, forestry, genetics, geography, geology, geophysics, glaciology, hydrography, limnology, natural history, oceanography, palaeontology, physiography, public health, social survey, soil science and zoology (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 1).

(e.g., Caputo, 2000; Marcus, 1998). The way that the social sciences has approached and understood fieldwork is invaluable for reconceptualizing the field beyond the limiting boundaries of science and for finding artistic ways of tackling the field (e.g. Goodall, 2000; Wolcott, 1995). And although I have concentrated on the field, you will find that connections to the home and the gallery have not been ignored.

The field is intimately connected to ideologies and beliefs about nature and landscape. Science is distinguished both by the belief in an external reality that can be described and predicted – Nature -- and in the use of the scientific model. Some ideas about nature are specific to science, whilst others overflow from more general or commonsense approaches derived from popular culture and society's culture as a whole.

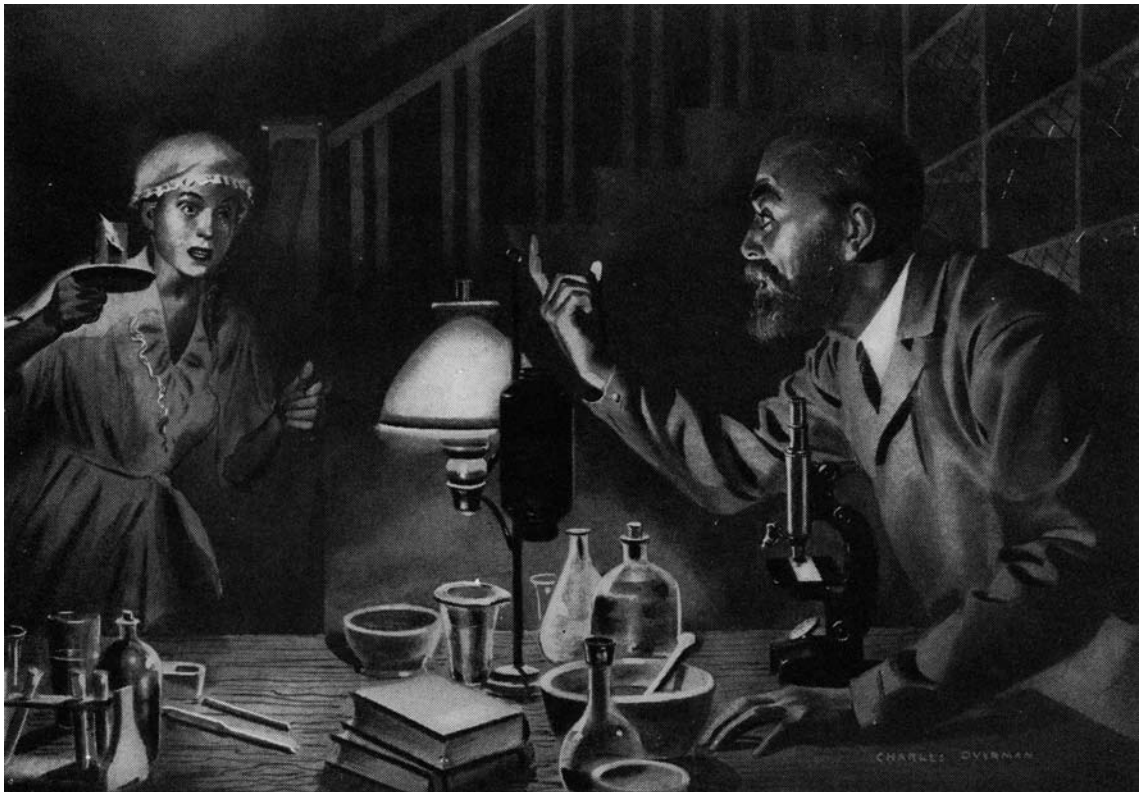


Figure A.1.1 Robert Koch bids his wife look through the microscope at the tubercle bacilli he has just isolated, (found image).

There are strongly held archetypes of the scientific process. One archetype (and cliché) is that it is a solitary process with the antisocial (male) genius/mad scientist holed up in his laboratory. Another archetype is the heroic (male) scientific explorer risking life and limb in the deepest darkest jungle. These models of heroic science have had a significant role in shaping the nature of the field. The fact that the field was seen as perilous shaped the social identity of the researcher because it required moral virtues of sacrifice, endurance and discipline. The solitude of the scientist, for example, was linked to the “virtue” of objectivity (Oreskes, 1996) so that it was not just a methodological ideal but a moral one. These virtues were (and probably still are) connected to the role of expe-

riencing nature in building a healthy body through personal discipline. In some scientific disciplines doing fieldwork was couched in terms of a rite of passage into manhood. Historically the heroic scientific model posited the white upper-class male as the most objective and reliable fieldworker. It is not surprising that restrictions on gender and class sprung from the model (see Oreskes, 1996). Women had to forgo their feminine displays to be accepted in a masculine world. And although these conditions have been modified to a large extent, even today fieldwork is associated with sacrifice, relative hardship and physical exertion.

A.1.1 The laboratory and its opposite

The diversity of activities taking place is one reason why the field (as a cultural site) has been little investigated. In contrast the laboratory as a space of science has been scrutinized both as a social setting (e.g. Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979) and in the physical organisation of space (e.g. Agar, 1998; Gieryn, 1998). A significant foundation text was *Laboratory life: the social construction of scientific facts* (1979) written by Steve Woolgar and Bruno Latour. Working from a background in anthropology, and in cooperation with the sociologist Woolgar, Latour set out to observe his scientists as a tribe. He looked at how science gets done over time by looking at the way scientific papers get published and how careers progress. In Latour's (1987) later book, *Science in Action* he concluded that the truth that scientists are searching for is not something hidden which must be unearthed by the application of logic, but a contingent process of negotiation between human and nonhuman actors (i.e., Actor-Network Theory). It is a negotiation of money, technological resources, prestige, status and human identities. Truth is not inherent in any scientific finding but a belief used after the fact to rhetorically defend the theory itself.

Latour's view of the workings of a laboratory has been very influential. More interesting for artists is Latour's participation in the 1999 Antwerpen Open, *Laboratorium* where he contributed to an interdisciplinary contemporary art event about the nature of the laboratory and experimentation² (Obirst & Vanderlinden, 1999) Largely following on from the methodological framework of Latour, *Laboratorium* set out to explore the questions of "what is the meaning of laboratories? What is the meaning of experiments? When do experiments reach public consensus? Is rendering public what happens inside the laboratory of the scientist and the studio of the artist a contradiction in terms?" (Obirst & Vanderlinden, 1999, p. 7). Looking at the connections explored in *Laboratorium* it is evident that a third opposite for the field is the artist's studio. Although this project did not take the studio as its subject matter, the parallels between the laboratory and the studio underlie it.

There are six notable differences between the laboratory and the field. Firstly, laboratories are exclusive spaces with restrictive access. They are highly structured communal spaces where scientists work in teams or collegiate groups. There is strong social

2 Latour also co-curated *Iconoclash* (Latour & Wiebel, 2002).

Figure A.1.2 Matt Mullican, *Studio Shots*, 1989-1999 (Obrist & Vanderlinden, 1999, p. 39).

interaction and conditioning from the social group around them. In contrast, work in the field is still often solitary (reflecting the heroic model). In-group interaction can occur when communicating with colleagues away in the metropolis, but in general the fieldwork community is dispersed. The practitioner of fieldwork has to deal with the people that they meet: who live there or are also travelling there, and who are often from different cultures or subcultures in a society. The worker in the laboratory is largely insulated from these other groups.

Secondly, each site has a differing relationship to time. The laboratory is about stasis and the control of time. The environment can be regulated so that all but one variable can remain constant. The laboratory is the home of the control and the placebo. Situations can be duplicated to create replicable data. In comparison, conditions in the field are unrepeatable. Kuklick and Kohler (1996, p. 3) describe the nature of the phenomena in the field as “multivariate, historically produced, often fleeting and dauntingly complex and uncontrollable”. The experience of the field may be local but it is also transient as the time in the field is limited.

Thirdly, the laboratory is a high-tech location. This is not to say that fieldwork does not require equipment. The field is a site where portability is stressed and skills of improvisation are needed to deal with the natural and cultural surrounds. Fieldworkers

rely critically on their technology for survival *and authenticity*: a field scientist working on his or her own must maintain credibility through believable equipment and accepted methods. If an observation is deemed too far-fetched, the scientist has fewer avenues to defend their work because no one else was there.

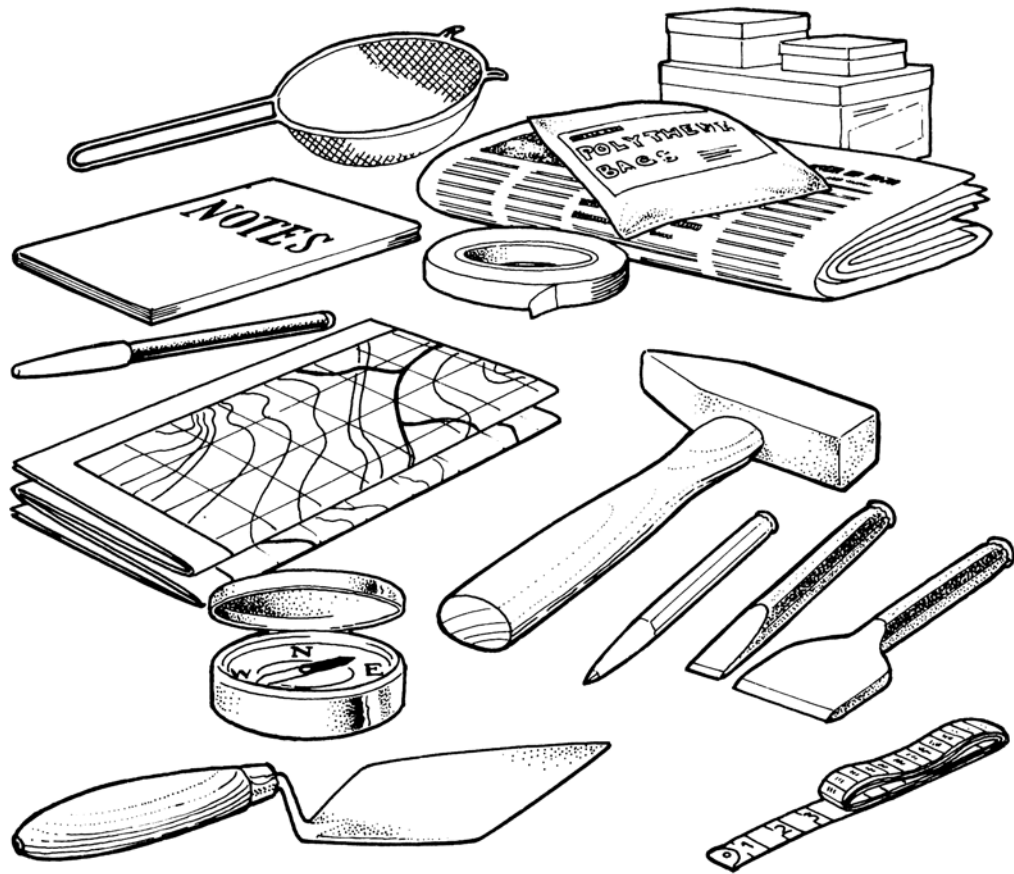
Again, on the one hand, the laboratory is a key site where power is played out. On the other hand, the field is where power is diffuse and dispersed. A consequence of the power of the laboratory is that a significant proportion of field customs have been translated from the lab. Laboratories have a global social and physical organisation, which is replicated worldwide: laboratories are much more universal. This is another reason why the laboratory has been attractive for academics and artists to investigate, whilst the field remains less so. But the very localised nature of the field also creates a new flavour that is more applicable to a world of local, diverse and competing sites: “such diversity evokes a vision in which the notion of ‘space’ is breaking down before our eyes” (C. Smith & Agar, 1998, p. 2).

The type of science that takes place is the fifth difference between the laboratory and field. There is perhaps more qualitative leeway in the field because of the difficulty in establishing experimental set-ups. It has been the home of the observational scientist, whilst those more theoretical stay at home. Different types of people get attracted to fieldwork because of the heroic science model. In the past the uncertainty of solitary observation has led to examples of fraud (McCook, 1996). Historically,

the transformation of an object collected in the field into an object that appeared in a scientific paper was a long and often tenuous process of intellectual legitimisation. Ideally, the collector collected the “natural” object in the field, making careful observations of the circumstances. Then the object and the description of its manner of collection were passed back to the metropolis through as few hands as possible, since each transfer of the object and observations implied a possible degradation of the information (McCook, 1996, p. 183).

A significant research theme in the history of fieldwork has been “chronic issues of status and credibility that derive from the social and methodological tensions between laboratory and field standards of evidence and reasoning” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 3). In the orthodox model of the scientific process there is a neat separation between data/sample gathering in the field and analysis and synthesis in the lab, as part of the “straightjacket” of objectivism. In reality these latter “mind” processes are never clearly separated. The process of writing up one’s fieldnotes every evening, or spinning out hypotheses about geological structures in the process of being mapped around the kitchen tent table (Schwarz, 2003), are already instances of organising one’s thoughts. Already an everyday modification to the scientific process has taken place.

Lastly, the fieldworker comes back from the field accompanied by his or her samples. Things in the lab have fixed meaning derived within the social group. It is rare that a laboratory object is “taken in” and given meaning by other social systems such as the general public. In contrast, samples from the field often have contested and ambiguous meaning. For example a bowerbird is both a participant in the Dreaming as well as being



The equipment you will need for serious collecting

Figure A.1.3 The serious collector (found image).

a bird to be “ticked off” by birdwatchers. Types of samples can include specimens of rocks, plants or animals (dead or alive), numerical data from instruments, photographs, statistics from surveys, or maps. The types of things brought back are usually easy to carry and reasonably stable. They are brought back to be used in the laboratory or deposited in a museum collection. They act as evidence to persuade and argue theories.

There is still a place too for curiosities whose values, as objects, remain unsettled. Objects from the field are more likely to re-enter the wider cultural discourse. Famous samples like archaeological finds can be transformed into cultural items (e.g. the controversy surrounding the Elgin Marbles). Art collectors and connoisseurs value ethnographic material. Private collectors seek mineral samples and fossils. Even visual materials from the field such as maps and botanical illustrations can become highly valued art commodities (Johns, 1996).

A.1.2 Patrolling the boundaries

One of the ways in which the field is exciting is in its ambiguous boundaries. Fieldwork takes place in public space. This makes the field a place of potential cultural translation (e.g. appropriation). As noted there may be both permanent residents and transients “engaged in hunting and fishing, foraging, camping, prospecting, touring, composing poems and novels, painting pictures, and taking photographs” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 4). Kuklick & Kohler go on to note that, although this population may not agree with each other and will often have conflicting needs, the interactions between them affect fieldwork in many ways. Unlike the laboratory with its symbolic or physical boundaries, the scientist in the field will always interact with the non-scientists. One of the most important types of interaction is with a local guide or informant. In a foreign environment, the fieldworker is dependent on the local assistant who may only partially understand or share the goals of fieldwork. But in the best of cases the informant is so useful that they can be considered major collaborators (Camerini, 1996). The scientists also share the same public communication systems and this makes their activities impossible to conceal.

Figure A.1.4 Ali Wallace, Alfred Wallace’s assistant (Camerini, 1996, p. 55).

Historical fieldwork was complicit with the imperialist project (Driver, 2001). Field scientists used the transport, communication and social networks of colonialism. Fieldworkers were often dependent on the largesse of the local colonial potentate. The objects brought back were material booty for the various imperial museums. The desire to be able to name all things in a universal inventory was the expression of ultimate power over space. Inventorying the world was also the precursor of exploitation.

Fieldwork is one of the last areas of science where amateur participants (such as bird watchers and fungi collectors) can make significant contributions through observations and by taking samples. Amateurs and non-scientists also had an important historical role as collectors. The growth of ecotourism in the 1990s has seen an increasing number of people paying to directly participate in the field. “Today as in the Victorian era, middle-class people believe that experience of places they understand as unspoiled nature will bring them personal growth and renewal” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 5).

Science in the field is in some ways closer to the everyday because of the overlapping relationship that it has to other ways of knowing the outside, such as the various forms of recreation, travel, exploration or resource harvesting. A form of cultural translation takes place where scientists in the field take advantage of materials and models from outside. The identity of the fieldworker is mobile or unstable because their behaviours are often translated from other outdoor pursuits to the point where it is difficult to tell them apart. Also, the phenomena of time off in the field (or time not directly engaged in fieldwork), forces the scientist to cross the boundary into other roles: “the field is a site conducive to innovation, in which even those acts that seem to translate the unfamiliar into the familiar may constitute creative synthesis born of improvisation with available resources” (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996, p. 13).

Historically fieldworkers have been mistaken for madmen, bandits, spies, sportsmen, tourists, poachers, fish and game wardens, customs officers, and any sort of colonial official (Kuklick & Kohler, 1996). The ambiguity of a less stable social identity also persists because the roles of fieldworkers have sometimes required mimicry and subterfuge to fit in. This is particularly so with field anthropology in the participant observer mode. The field also provides the opportunity to transgress without being seen: to “go native” -- ordinary behaviour can be put aside -- with the additional prospect of reinventing an identity as wild as one likes. Historically the field enabled the fieldworker to escape prior restrictions of class, status or convention. The flip side of course was adopting a hyper virtuous persona, holding on to upright standards of behaviour and drawing a clear separation between the self and the Other (or wild). Fieldworkers have the choice of centring power in the subject and expressing it as rigorously or extravagantly as they like, or inhabiting the space of uncertain power in a more flexible way.

A.1.3 Flexible sites

There have been changes to the field over time. The golden age of classical fieldwork was the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Livingstone, 2003). A similarity of each of the disciplines of natural science has been a clear path of development from the beginnings of science by armchair travellers, to the truly heroic mode of fieldwork out into the “empty world”, to the growth of a mature field experience. The armchair scientists mused upon traveller’s tales rather than experienced the field for themselves. They had to judge what was truth or fancy based upon its variation from established fact and upon the reputation of the traveller. With the increasing ease of travel the armchair theoreticians gave way to individual gentlemen of means travelling to satisfy their curiosity and collections. The pioneers of fieldwork could devise their own methods of mapping knowledge but “by the early nineteenth century, however, ‘field work’ had become much more systematic as surveyors charted the states of nature. At the same time, individual practitioners became increasingly marginalised by the establishment of privileged sites for scientific practice and pedagogy” (C. Smith & Agar, 1998, p. 3). The latter sites were not only the laboratories but also the natural history museums, universities and learned societies.

It would seem that the *quality* of power, and flexibility of the field, has changed over time. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a time of increasing militarisation of fieldwork as it was transformed into expeditions (or expedition-like behaviour), at the same time as natural history was being subdivided into disciplines “each with their own methods, agendas and subject matters” (Outram, 1996, p. 249). Structures of conformity have resulted from the standardisation of methodological technique and the normative regulation of behaviour through powerful forcing beliefs such as in the objectivity of science. As noted earlier, field experience is also a legitimating tool, a rite of initiation and passage. This is particularly strong in some disciplines (e.g. geology); under reassessment in geography, for example; and redefined in anthropology and ethnology. We have seen how much more concentrated power is in the laboratory. My questions have been, just how far have these coercive and conforming practices continued in the field to the present day, and is it still a flexible site?

A.1.4 Disappearance of the field

In the past twenty years or so the nature of the field experience has changed in response to changing technologies. Speed has increased and virtual distance has decreased: it is now common to see laptops in the field, which speed up the input and analysis of data, as well as digital cameras to instantly retrieve imagery and satellite communications to allow interaction with the non-field. The equipment used has in many cases become more expensive and more specialised and work places and work practices have become more organised and structured. It is much more likely for people to form teams or work for large organisations. All these factors reflect a repositioning of fieldwork closer to the laboratory. More significantly, fieldwork may perhaps have become less common (or less attractive), partly due to funding restrictions, and notably due to advances in computer simulation. In ways that would not have been dreamed about prior to the invention of the personal computer, complex networks of variables can be modelled and scenarios played out to simulate natural systems.

Important questions during the project were, if the field is less visited and less visible, will references to the field be tinged with nostalgia, and will it be a retreat from *FutureNatural*? Rightly or wrongly there is a feeling that the heroic search for pure knowledge is no longer important. Among mammals and birds, the discovery of new species has slowed to a trickle. Although this is not the case for many other organisms it may be that the thrill of “virgin” fieldwork, of the *terra incognita*, has disappeared. One can take scant comfort from the fact that beneath our feet and behind our back the world’s biosphere is under pressure. The practicalities of fixing up the messes we make are now more urgent than the excitement of the hunt. Such environmental problems will not go away. If there has been a shift away from solitary heroism it has been the change to a “management” ethos with its own attendant assumptions.

Does the field still exist as a heterotopic site allowing for deviance and continual negotiation of power/space? The field may still be a relatively unstable site in comparison to the laboratory. It may still generate *places in-between* – places of transgression. The field is still differentiated by its connection to physical phenomena, and in its relations to public spaces and a social “out there.” The field continues to be a site of cultural translation. The continually changing nature of the many phenomena and the temporary or transient nature of experience are fruitful sites of artistic investigation. The improvised relation between the field and the self (especially through its tools) has not disappeared entirely. The field, therefore, throws up many possibilities. The **fieldwork/fieldwalking** project set out to make work from the *thickness* of these possibilities.

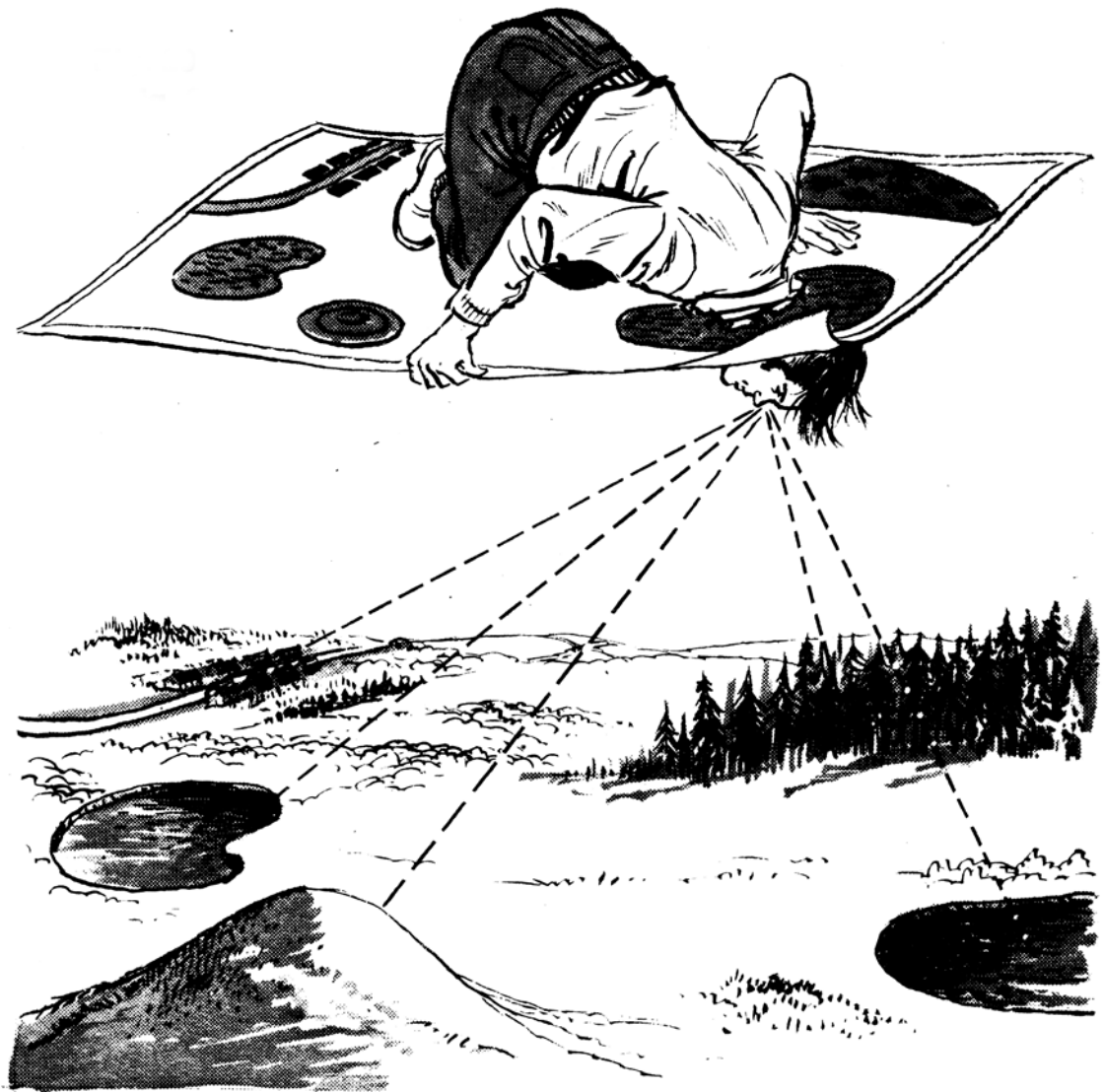
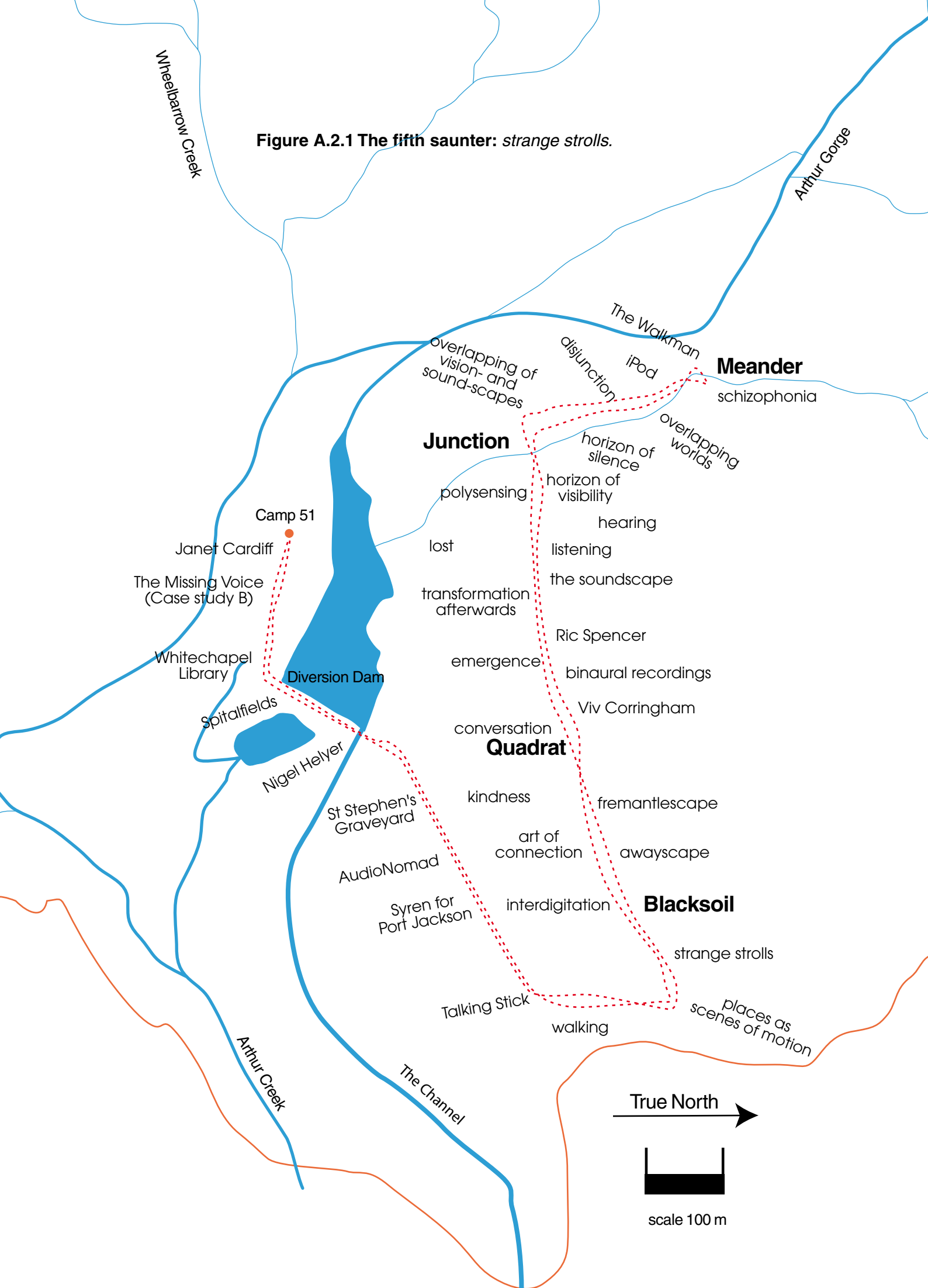


Figure A.1.5 Understanding maps (found image).

Figure A.2.1 The fifth saunter: *strange strolls*.



A.2 A discussion of the exhibition **strange strolls** and my work *To Meander and back*

Artists as diverse as Janet Cardiff and Nigel Helyer have explored the use of sound and spatial technologies to make artworks about places. In these artworks the movement through space of the viewer/participant is integral. The audience listens to linear (or sometimes more interactive) sound works via personal headphones allowing them to make alternative journeys through spaces. Appendix A.2 describes the **strange strolls** sound art walking exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in 2005 and the walk that I developed for it called *To Meander and back* (P. Phillips, 2005c). The exhibition involved 16 artists from around the world making 30-minute sound walking tours of the streets of Fremantle. In **strange strolls** the strongest audience impression was astonishment, either when the fidelity of the sound techniques made people feel as though they really were in a distant land, or when tiny serendipitous happenings linked the *seen* and the *heard* in circumstances magnified by the general disjunction of places.

This Appendix introduces the concepts of the soundscape and Don Ihde's (1976) field of vision and field of sound, before considering the way that the **strange strolls** works articulated the differences between viewsapes and soundscapes. It examines the nature of the disjunction produced when the local sound-scape (the *here* of Fremantle) is overlaid with the *away-scape* of the *there* (the sounds of London, Istanbul, Shetland or *the walkingcountry*). I argue that the away place was imbricated into the local (Fremantle) place.

The notion of "transformation" discussed in Section 3.4 of the Exegesis is expanded to include not only the imbrication of two places but also to include the transformation of the participant during and after the soundwalk and the trajectory of the artwork outwards into the public sphere as other people encounter the participant/walker in public spaces. The idea that listening as an act of kindness is also presented. The soundwalks demonstrated a performed sense of site specificity aligned with Kaye (2000) and Kwon (2002). By walking, the bodies of each listener "performed" the artwork into existence: the artwork had a life beyond the dimensions of the material art object.

This Appendix discusses the difference between translation and transformation of one place to another that was introduced in Section 3.4 of the Exegesis. It works through some of the findings through sound art walks: artworks where the viewer or participant walks through spaces listening to sounds set in place by artists. I contend that to make a distinction between translation and transformation is not just a semiotic fancy, but reflects a change in the way that art objects, audiences, artists and environments interact with each other. To begin I will set the scene by describing examples of existing sound and walking artworks.

A.2.1 Walking and sound

A.2.1.1 Janet Cardiff and Nigel Helyer

The works of Janet Cardiff and Nigel Helyer are two examples of the diverse use of sound art walks that renew the experience of places through reworking and reimagining existing places. Canadian artist Janet Cardiff (working with husband George Bures Miller) has made sound walking artworks using pre-recorded sound tracks on portable CD players. The audience listens to linear sound works via personal headphones allowing them to make alternative journeys through spaces. Her work is characterised by strong narrative development often using detective or film noir devices and a montage of fact and fictional sound sources to suggest past or future mysteries that may have transpired.

Figure A.2.2 Janet Cardiff, *The missing voice (Case Study B)*, 1999, (Lingwood & van Noord, 1999, p. 18). Catalogue image, Whitechapel Library.

The missing voice (Case Study B) (Cardiff, 1999) starts at the Whitechapel library where you skim the pages of a detective novel before departing on a walking tour of the streets outside that is part stream of consciousness narrative and part historical account. Human voices are a prominent feature of her work. Often Cardiff's voice speaks directly to you, creating the impression that you and she are alone on an adventure. In *The missing voice (Case Study B)* it begins by Cardiff introducing a story about a found photograph of a girl with long red hair. Later a male detective speaks of trying to find this woman. A number of separate fragments and narratives are layered over the streets of Spitalfields. And as you go along Cardiff's voice fractures into multiple personae – a guide, a third person character, a confessor and a distinctive lo-fi voice recorded on a Dictaphone. Each of these voices speaks from slightly differing perspectives. Who is the lady with the long red hair? The walk ends up at Liverpool Street Station where the [a?] female narrator gets onto a train.

She's getting on the train. He runs along the platform. Just as it's pulling out of the station she sees his face in the window and tries to hide. As her train picks up speed she turns her head to watch him fade in the distance (Cardiff, 1999).

The experience of doing the soundwalk in 1999 proved to be a key event in the development of my art practice. I found the work both absorbing and disquieting. For example, I was struck by the synchronicity of the banana peel on the ground and in the soundtrack -- “here’s another banana peel on the ground... that’s about fifty banana peels I’ve seen this week...” (Cardiff, 1999) -- I wondered if it was part of an elaborate hoax by the artist. The boundary of the artwork (see Figure 1.41) was unclear. A pythonesque parade of kazoo players passes you by on the back streets of Spitalfields. Approaching the last viewing point above the station concourse at the very end of the walk I am by this stage completely immersed. Cardiff hisses, “there’s a man in a black suit walking behind you” (Cardiff, 1999). I spun around in genuine alarm¹. Cardiff “appropriates your present and insinuates into it a virtual world, providing a dual experience that is both in and out of sync with the environment you are in. The more involved you become, the more you realise that the power of these installations and audio-walks resides in the singularity of your perception and experience” (Scott, 1999, p. 4).

Figure A.2.3 Janet Cardiff, *The missing voice* (Case Study B), 1999, Spitalfields streets (Catalogue image, Lingwood & van Noord, 1999, pp. 36-37).

In a more technologically involved approach Australian artist Nigel Helyer is also working with sound and space with the aim of developing locationally sensitive mobile immersive audio experiences (Helyer, c. 2000). Between 1999 and 2001 Helyer worked with the Lake Technology Company programming stereo sound tracks into a system that could register the position of a listener within +/- 2 cm accuracy (using differential GPS) and could respond to the direction that the head was pointing to a similar degree of accuracy. The result was a field of virtual sound that responded precisely to the position of the listener. This allows the participant to walk through a space listening to sounds that are locationally specific – changing as the participant turns her head and moves along. The project was prototyped in St Stephen’s graveyard in Newtown, Sydney (see Figure A.2.4). The experience of the participant was of perceiving gravestones that talked and sound that seemingly circled around the historical obelisks in the graveyard.

¹ Am I annoyed at being manipulated or do I enjoy the fantasy?



Figure A.2.4 Nigel Helyer, GPS unit in St Stephen's graveyard as part of Helyer's collaboration with Lake Technologies, 1999-2001, (Helyer, c. 2000).

Helyer writes,

Here we are engaging with a seemingly live sonic organism that is responsive to our presence, our orientation and the traces of our wanderings, and which appears un-cannily embedded in the site itself (Helyer, c. 2000).

Helyer is currently working with the University of New South Wales on the audioNomad project. Again using differential GPS and advanced computer programming, the project's aim is to develop *hand-held technology*. Similar to Cardiff, Helyer uses an extensive repertoire of pre-recorded fact and fiction, past and present, to montage place. In this case it is non-linear, essentially interactive depending upon the path of the viewer, and can even be edited by the artist in real-time.

In March 2006 I made a research visit to a pilot for audioNomad, *Syren for Port Jackson*. Figures A.2.5 to A.2.9 show shots of *Syrens* that trialled the developing technology in this case installed on a ferry moving around Sydney Harbour. The coloured circles on the display screen represent the spatial field for each sound element. These can be large or small, loud or soft. They can overlap other sounds. The sound fields can be irregularly shaped polygons. A stack of individual sounds files can be linked to play randomly or consecutively at each sound element. Sounds can be made to move along a track within the spatial field. This track can be relative to the centre of the sound field or relative to the listener. In this trial the audience sat in the passenger area surrounded by a 12.2 (i.e., 12 speakers and 2 sub woofers) speaker sound system. Some of the sound associations were literal – cannons at Fort Denison --- and others were more poetic -- a thunderstorm just off Kirribilli House.

Also currently in development (May 2006) by Helyer is *Talking Stick* at the San Francisco Exploratorium in association with an exhibition about listening. This time using induction coil technology, an internal space will be overlaid with different sound stories that are accessed by walking around with a stick with an ear-phone (see Figure A.2.10). Helyer writes

Each visitor will avail themselves of a "Talking Stick" from an array of various heights, selecting one that matches their own height, placing the small speaker horn mounted at the stick's upper tip ... next to the ear whilst the lower tip grazes the floor. The Talking-Sticks themselves are minimal objects without interface, buttons or instructions ~ the visitor proceeds into the "Listen" exhibition area... by slowly sweeping the floor the visitor gradually discovers "pools" of audio at different locations each with a differing sonic narrative... Each visitor shall, in their own fashion, "perform" the work, slowly building up a memory map, gradually piecing together a spatial network and sonic narrative. This "Sleuth-like" activity brings together, listening, memory and spatial skill, without the aid of textual reminders or visual cues, activating abilities and faculties we frequently ignore (Helyer, 2006).

Both Nigel Helyer and Janet Cardiff harness the strengths of sound *and* installation art in their work. Sound is inherently spatial: we hear, more or less, in 360



Figure A.2.5 Nigel Helyer, *Syrens for Port Jackson* as part of Helyer's audioNomad, Collaborative Research Project with the University of New South Wales, March 2006. Detail of on-board display on the M.V. Regal (Principal researcher Daniel Woo on right).



Figure A.2.6 Nigel Helyer, *Syrens for Port Jackson* as part of Helyer's audioNomad, Collaborative Research Project with the University of New South Wales, March 2006. Screen close-up of Circular Quay. The black circle is the M.V. Regal.

degrees. In ideal conditions we inhabit a half hemisphere of reception, a dome of comprehension with its edges being the horizon of silence. Sound is immersive – we have no earlids – and dynamic². Its temporal nature gives us particular access to the precognitive, to memory and dreams. Installation is an invitation to move through space and thus create a trail of personalized experience. And as we have seen, when the viewer/participant becomes mobile, walking becomes the central *motif*.



Figure A.2.7 Nigel Helyer, *Syrens for Port Jackson* as part of Helyer's audioNomad, March 2006. Screen close-up of the many sound elements represented graphically by coloured sound fields. Opera House in centre with Harbour Bridge top left.

A.2.1.2 Some points on walking

Walking is one of the most basic apprehensions of place and an everyday experience that many people share. Whilst our boots are tools (see Michael, 2000), walking is much less mediated than other common ways of travel such as cars. Walking traverses space at a certain speed (for most humans averaging 4.5 km/hr). Simon Pope (2003) argues that walking should be seen as an informational technology that is speculative in nature. Its movement demonstrates our aliveness and emphasises our bodily reach and dimensions. I have mentioned sound and vision. Walking makes us attentive to other senses: proprioception (body awareness), equilibrioception (balance), thermoception (heat) and nociception (pain)! From a phenomenological perspective walking

² Sound is *as much about* impermanence and fading as *obdurate* sight is about existing in the present.



Figure A.2.8 Nigel Helyer, *Syrens for Port Jackson* as part of Helyer's audioNomad, Collaborative Research Project with the University of New South Wales, March 2006. Inside view with 12 speakers positioned around the cabin. Helyer is on the left.



Figure A.2.9 Nigel Helyer, *Syrens for Port Jackson* as part of Helyer's audioNomad, Collaborative Research Project with the University of New South Wales, March 2006. View of passing scenery.



Figure A.2.10 Nigel Helyer, *Talking Stick* project with the San Francisco Exploratorium, May 2006, (Helyer, 2006). Two sticks being tested in the lab.

draws the body together in a kinaesthetic whole, at the same time (by passing *through* the world) makes explicit the connections that we have *with* the world. Walking maps places. Rebecca Solnit (2000, p. 276) stresses “the way walking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it.” Walking “reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place.” In his recent book *Earth-mapping: artists reshaping*

landscape (2005) Edward Casey has repeated his emphasis on the role of walking in places that was mentioned in *The Fate of Place: A philosophical history* (1997). Through walking places become “scenes in motion” where neither space nor time dominated but come together. He states

Body and motion constitute mapping in a place: they constitute a place as a map. A given place is always at once spatial and temporal; or better it triumphs the putative priority of space or time... by combining both in a scene of motion (2005, p. 24).

A.2.2 strange strolls

In the two examples above Cardiff and Helyer have tailored works of art that are site specific in the sense of being responsive to the sensual and cultural environments that they exist within – both interacting with “place” and imaginatively extending it. Both have been influential either formally or conceptually in my work. But returning to the theme of here and there in Section 3.4, what exactly happens when one place is “formed on”, or “emplaced in” another place? In Section 3.4 I employed the concepts of the **here** and the **there**. In this Appendix I have reframed the discussion more specifically in terms of the **local** place and the **away** place³. I have used the terms **awayscape** and **Fremantlescape** to refer to the *sounds* of these two places.

With an interest in walking and sound I invited fifteen other artists to participate in the **strange strolls** sound art walking exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle in 2005. The 14 artworks were made by four Western Australian artists, three eastern states artists and nine international artists/pairs of artists. Similar to some of Janet Cardiff’s projects, the audience hired out a standard Portable CD player for a thirty-minute excursion through the streets of the West End. The work could be on *any theme*. The only parameter set for the artists was that it had to contain the navigational directions for the viewer/participant. I should point out that the artists came from a variety of backgrounds: from emerging to mid-career; from electronica and sound/music backgrounds to visual artists working primarily in installation. Some had no prior experience in sound art. A few of the artists were specifically interested in walking as an art medium.

Some examples include local Freo artist Minaxi May who devised a walk titled *Fashionistic Consuming* where you took a **strange strolls** showbag and toured a number of hip youth clothing stores where you were given promotional items or May’s hand-made art objects. In *2untitled2* Maria Manuela Lopes and Paulo Bernardino flew from Portugal to Australia prior to the show and compressed the plane trip into a route around Fremantle that also connected up existing Portuguese landmarks. The spaces that they recorded were the non-places of transit lounges and rows of anonymous economy class seats. Viv Corringham took the same twists and turns in the streets of London and sung and described what she experienced there in *City Switch*. Lawrence English’s work *Ghost Towns* was a sveltely composed and quite abstract sound experience based on the

3 The “away” place need not have “physical” existence elsewhere.

sounds he found in, and generated from, deserted ghost towns. Feminist geographer Begum Basdas narrated the streets of the Beyoglu district of Istanbul as you perambulated the South Terrace café strip in *Femme Strolls*. All the artists created works rich in intention, meaning and story (which regrettably I cannot discuss here), but despite the variety of subject matter and levels of sound recording and editing technology used there is a clear theme of disjunction between the **local** (Fremantle) place and the **away** place.

Please listen to Tracks 1 and 2 on the accompanying CD. These are extracts from Viv Corringham's work *City Switch*.

Of her work a participant writes,

Enjoyed the tour. Points that worked especially well were when the questions as to what I was looking at -- Marine Terrace -- "I wonder if you can see the sea?" Your "busy people" or "idle smokers" made me look at people near me.

The first thing I should say is that Corringham's work, along with several others, was created using binaural microphones⁴. These microphones are designed to be placed in the ears of the person recording the sound (or a dummy⁵) at the same distance apart, as would be the ears of the viewer/participant wearing headphones when played back. In such a situation the playback effect through headphones is a stunningly realistic 360 degree effect because the binaural microphones replicate the bodily dimensions of our hearing⁶.

Figure A.2.11 Janet Cardiff recording using a binaural microphone dummy (Christov-Bakargiev, 2002, pp. 96-97).

4 Or mixed down to a binaural output.

5 These dummies usually have hair and often have accurately modelled pinnae (the fleshy ridges of the outer ears). The latter play an important role in modifying the frequency balance of sounds to help us understand the direction of a sound.

6 Of course when you play them back through stereo speakers the effect is negligible.

In general, the artworks in the exhibition were well received (Boase, 2005; Hatley, 2005; Ihlein, 2005, 2006; Jorgensen, 2006; K. Phillips, 2005; Uhlmann, 2005). The strongest audience impression was astonishment. Most frequently this was associated with binaural effects. Sometimes this was because the sound that triggered the reaction was closely aligned to what was going on in the local environment. For example, a motorbike going past in London, making a ghostly appearance in Fremantle. At other times strong reactions arose when the recorded sound was evocative but vastly different to the surrounding landscape. An example would be Dorothee von Rechenberg's <Snow> walk through snow in Switzerland. This was quite jarring at the beginnings of a Perth summer. Even without binaural, the fidelity of the sound techniques made people feel as though they really were in a distant land. These sorts of effects produce a kind of frisson associated with the disjunction of places. By frisson I mean that there was a brief intense reaction – excitement, recognition, possibly a physical shudder or thrill, almost *imperceptibly* edged with fear.

Conversely there were expressions of pleasure at tiny serendipitous happenings. Small things in the “seen” and the (recorded) “heard” lined up. An odour example might be when in Begum Basdas's work when we walk past the fresh smells of a Turkish restaurant. Of course these circumstances were magnified by the general disjunction of places but the reaction to these happenings was slightly different. Delight was the underlying emotion. The perception of the viewer/participant was shifted and became “fully present and open” to possibilities (Hove, 2002). This is the delight of wonder. When even the tiniest wonder comes it brings us to a standstill. The physical objects of our wonder “reveal themselves to us in an active and compelling sense” (Hove, 2002). As explained in Section 3.2.4, the process involves moving through feelings of delight, inspiration and perplexity until we come finally to disquiet. Released from wonder the world is rewoven in a uniquely different way.

Even the artworks made by local artists *in situ* with much more consciously place-aligned local sounds, were new adventures every time they were walked. Time had passed since the local sounds had been recorded. For example, Ric Spencer's work, *Keeping on your right side* was based upon recordings of Fremantle edited and given a conceptual twist.

Tracks 3 and 4 are short extracts of Ric Spencer's *Keeping on your right side*⁷.

⁷ Spencer also had a specific idea in his work of showing how it was like to be deaf in one ear: in his catalogue statement he writes “...when I walk with someone I always have to walk on their right side, this is because I can't hear at all in my right ear, so I always position myself to hear out of my left ear – otherwise I would be walking with my head turned sideways trying to capture the conversation and I'd always be walking straight into things” (Spencer, 2005b). By shifting the output almost exclusively to one ear Spencer disrupts the balance between here and there. Art interrupts the flow of the life-world and makes us aware of the world's very presence.

Of Spencer's work a participant writes.

I particularly like the interchangeability between the soundtrack and the real-life surrounding sounds. Whether it was coincidental or not, there seemed to be such strong connections between the sounds I was hearing and the actions happening around me. There was a very "local Fremantle" feel to it, like I was sitting at the up-markets with the hustle and bustle going on, and I like that local aspect...

A.2.3 The soundscape

Most scientific research into sound concentrates on seeking out sound sources and quantifying the nature of the sound broadcast out from them. The Canadian composer Murray Schafer (1977, 1993) popularised the term soundscape as a description of the overall sounds experienced in a place. In this schema the central point is the listener and the environment unfolds in space and time around her. Some of the artists in **strange strolls** were very conscious of adopting a "soundscape composition" approach. In this sub-genre of electroacoustic music, the context of the sounds played is embedded in the composition⁸. The texture of sounds is important especially in establishing the mood of a piece. An example of soundscape composition is Bill Fontana's well-known work, *The Sound Island* (1994) that linked up Dunkirk to the Arc de Triomphe on the 50th anniversary of the Allied landing. Sounds from hydrophones in the sea and microphones along the seaside were relayed live to Paris. Fontana's interest is in live ambient recordings projected by loudspeaker back into an urban location. He believes that the installations are powerful precisely because of "sound's capacity to elicit visual imagery through memory and knowledge" (Fontana, accessed 2006a).

The Fremantle soundscape is typical of an Australian inner city in that traffic and exhaust are the commonest sounds. Its two-story 19th century architecture gives a particular texture to the town, and although car-free areas are limited, it's a much more pedestrian oriented urban space than Perth's more recent suburban subdivisions. It still has a town hall bell⁹. The cafe strip is full of coffee conversations. Fremantle attracts a wide diversity of cultural groups. The Fishing Boat Harbour comes alive with the annual blessing of the fleet ceremony. The Inner Harbour sounds are industrial and muted as most cargoes are nowadays parcelled into containers; raucous local silver gulls steal your fish and chips. Unlike some other capital cities Perth has fewer feral bird species. It

⁸ The principles of soundscape composition are:

1. Listener recognisability of the source material is maintained, even if it subsequently undergoes transformation;
2. The listener's knowledge of the environmental and psychological context of the soundscape material is invoked and encouraged to complete the network of meanings ascribed to the music;
3. The composer's knowledge of the environment and psychological context of the soundscape material is allowed to influence the shape of the composition at every level, and ultimately the composition is inseparable from some or all aspects of that reality;
4. The work enhances our understanding of the world, and its influence carries over into everyday perceptual habits.

Thus, the real goal of the soundscape composition is the re-integration of the listener with the environment in a balanced ecological relationship (Truax, 2000), NOTE: Although related to site-specific art, sound composition *per se* **does not** imply sounds are played back in the place of composition or indeed that there is any *local* place *at all* when the composition is played/performed.

⁹ Very rarely in the early hours of summer mornings I can hear the bells from my bedroom window in East Fremantle.

still has large populations of the original honeyeaters. Willie-wagtails are making a return after being decimated by argentine ant spraying in the 1950s. These birds provide a rich dawn chorus (see Seddon, 2005) even in the heart of Fremantle. Escaped corellas have formed large populations in Perth that occasionally visit the Norfolk Island pines of The Esplanade Park and their raucous calls can split the soundscape. The seashore and its fringing vegetation at Arthur Head contribute their distinctive sighs. The maritime nature of Fremantle is even more apparent when the Fremantle Doctor comes howling in. The one-o'clock time cannon on Arthur Head is a strangely unpunctual soundmark subject to the endearingly idiosyncratic availability of volunteers to man it.

A.2.4 Listening and hearing

There are a number of differing models and descriptions of the process of hearing that I will not go into here¹⁰, suffice to say that there is a clear difference between hearing (which focuses on the *physical* process of sensing) and listening (which implies a more expansive understanding)¹¹. Helyer notes that listening

...is not something that many of us allow ourselves the time to do, dominated as we are by a constant flow of visual information, and so mindful of the demands of the clock. But listening, rather than simply hearing, is an ever present gateway to hidden worlds of detail and narrative; always close at hand, always available, always possible, requiring only our time, attention and concentration (Helyer, 2006).

In *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* Don Ihde (1976) begins the chapter The Auditory Dimension, with the following description of the field of vision and the field of sound (see Figures A.2.12 and A.2.13). He fixes his gaze on a box of paperclips. "I fix them in the centre of my vision" (1976, p. 49) The stationary box is mute. "A fly suddenly lands upon the wall next to the desk where the paperclips lie and begins to crawl up that wall." (1976, p. 50) For a moment, the fly exists within both the visual and aural horizon. The fly is both *seen* and *heard*. The box of paperclips, on the other hand, "stands beyond the horizon of sound" (1976, p. 50) even while it stands within the horizon of vision. And in the world outside the wind rustles. It is invisible to sight. Figure A.2.12 shows the "region" of sight, bounded by the horizon of invisibility. Figure A.2.13 illustrates the "region" of sound, which is circumscribed by a horizon of silence. Figure A.2.12

10 Compare Barry Truax's

- *Listening in search* (actively searching for information);
- *Listening in readiness* (ready to receive but concentrating on other things);
- *Background listening* (sounds ignored because no immediate significance); and
- *Distracted listening* concentrating very hard to hear in a noisy competed situation (Truax, 2001, p. 22)

to Pierre Schaeffer's differentiation of listening into hearing, attending and comprehending:

- *Listening* deals with the attention to someone or something: the intermediation of sound and the event that caused it. The sound is treated as an indication of the source;
- *Hearing* concerns the most elementary rough order of listening perception. One listens passively without specifically searching for a certain sound without explicitly comprehending the sonic information;
- *Attending* deals with the perceptual stage when one doesn't etymologise the sound: the derivation and origin of sounds are not searched for. Instead the perception operates on a selective level: one searches the specific qualities of a certain sound; and
- *Comprehending* is a semantic listening mode. The sound is treated as a sign or a code that consists of certain values (Hellström, 2002, p. 6).

11 There is no equivalent word for "expansive" seeing in English: hearing and listening; seeing and ...? For example, perceiving usually implies more than sight.

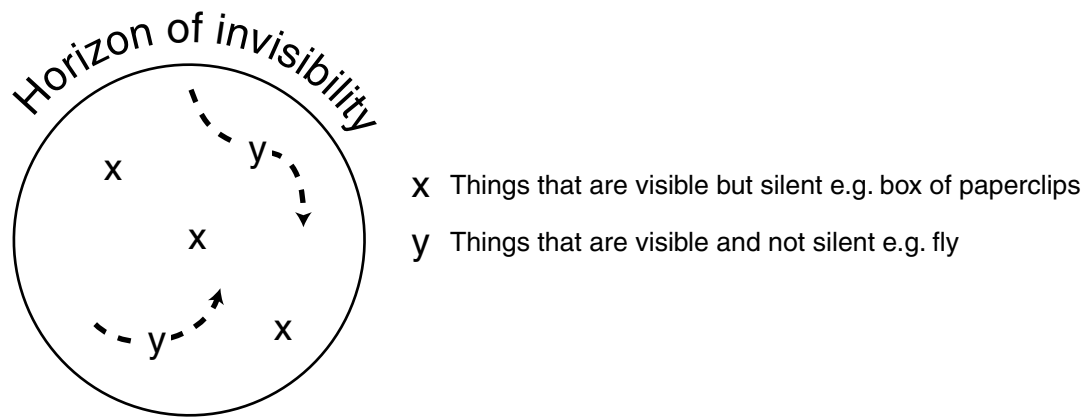


Figure A.2.12 The region of vision showing the horizon of invisibility (adapted from Figure 2 in Ihde, 1976, p. 52).

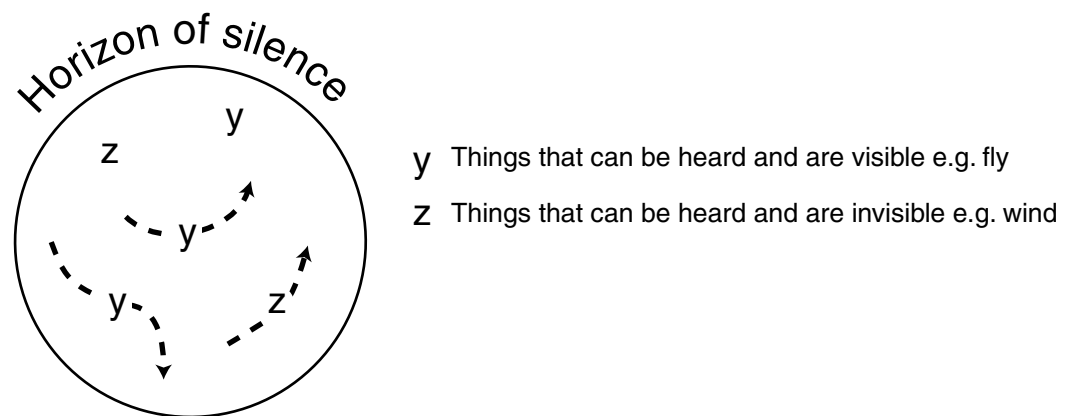


Figure A.2.13 The region of hearing showing the horizon of silence (adapted from Figure 3 in Ihde, 1976, p. 53).

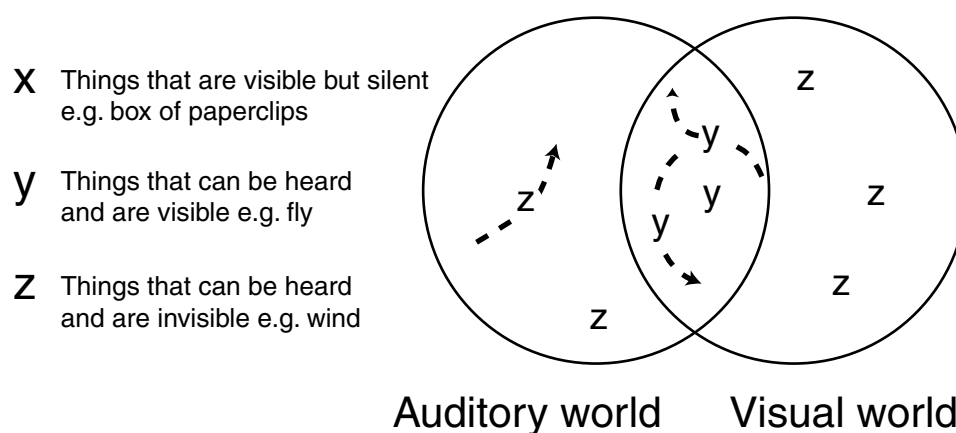


Figure A.2.14 The overlapping regions of sight and sound showing the distribution of different types of phenomena (adapted from Figure 4 in Ihde, 1976, p. 54).

contains the paperclip box and the fly. Figure A.2.13 contains the fly and wind. When we perceive both these “regions” overlap (Figure A.2.14).

In the case of **strange strolls**, walking through Fremantle the *soundscape* of the **away place**, the *awayscape*, is imposed upon the *visual* landscape of the **local place**. It might be said that it is a model of translation. Such a model would imply a faithful imposition of one on top of another. However, the sound itself *comes complete with its own evocation of visual imagery* that **demand upon** our senses as well. In other words, fleeting *imagery* generated from the awayscape collides with the local place¹². And of course memories and socio-cultural implications bloom outwards from the sounds themselves. This is a significant part of the disjunction experienced by the viewer/participant in **strange strolls**.

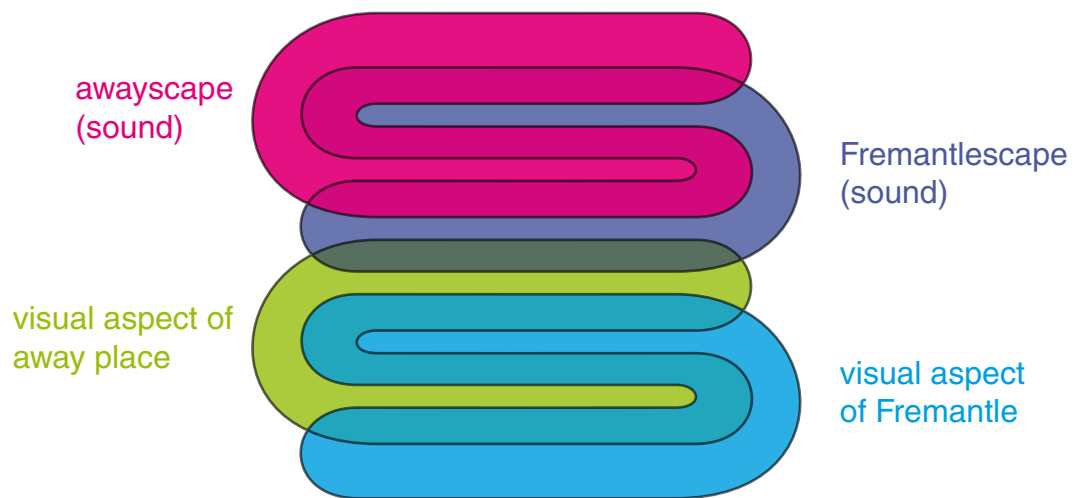


Figure A.2.15 An attempt in two dimensions to show the interdigitated nature of the auditory and visual aspects of the away place (left) and Fremantle (right).

A.2.5 The nature of the disjunction in strange strolls

In his historical account of the soundscape Murray Schafer (1993) is quick to emphasise the changing nature of sound as it has been effected by industrialism and recording technology. He defines the dislocation of sound sources from their referents produced by the technologies of recording, as *schizophonia*. Of course it is a basic acoustic paradox that the *away place is not there* for the viewer/participant. However, because of the prevalence of *schizophonia* today, I don't believe that this was a conceptual problem for the participants. After all, juxtaposition of recognisable and non-recognisable sound forms the basis of much music composition: “the brain is capable of reconstructing a message from partial information, even when the remainder of the message is not present” (Hellström, 2002, p. 9 quoting; Wishart, 1996).

¹² If someone goes beyond the strangeness of hearing the naked sounds and takes the time to listen, the actual visual aspects of the sound sculpture lies in this person's imagination, in their personal mental space to create virtual images (Fontana, accessed 2006b).

Being mobile adds an extra element of disjunction in the walks. It is obvious that walking interrupts the stable horizon of a Cartesian eye-space. But if instead we understand places to be a “scene of motion” (Casey, 2005, p. 24), then walking complements such living (animate) places. Using de Certeau, Thibaud (2003) frames the Portable CD player as a tactical device. He believes that sound walking evolves from being just a spatial experience to a richer spatio-phonic experience. Thibaud argues that there is a double movement first of de-territorialisation and then of re-territorialisation¹³. The centrality of walking in the works moves us from models of perception to models of perception in motion. The outcome is that walking is a significant contributor to the disjunction perceived in the **strange strolls** works

A.2.5.1 Some points on the Walkman¹⁴ (and the iPod)

Pioneering cultural analysis of the portable CD players by writers such as Rainer Schönhammer (1989), Paul Du Gay and others (1997), Michael Bull (2000) and Jean-Paul Thibaud (2003) emphasise the disjunction between the music headspace of the listener and public society. The Portable CD player is seen as a private intrusion into the public. A common trope is to see the listener as floating above the city space. The viewpoint of the listener is often likened to an unreal-cinematic experience¹⁵. And it could be argued that this is also *part of the disjunction* experienced by the viewer/participant in **strange strolls**. Whilst these analyses are useful, they are directed towards people listening to music. Whatever the style of music it is most often selected by the listener on the basis of familiarity and not strangeness. In other words, there is a tendency to assume that the participant is meditatively wrapped in a music listening mode, and that an *overlay* of sound *over* a visible local place occurs. Thibaud (2003), for example, stresses the *secret* (private) nature of the soundtrack *over* the public space. But the experience in **strange strolls** was that the Fremantle soundscape (with its cars, people and birds) *leaked* into the perception of the viewer/participant. *Even though enclosed headphones were used*, the effect of the existing Fremantlescape was substantial¹⁶. One cannot say that it was a simple translation of the away soundtrack onto a blank slate. There was a distinctly *double soundscape* – of the city *and* the head – of the awayscape and the Fremantlescape. Furthermore, the horizon of silence proposed by Ihde constantly swells out and drifts in as the two soundscapes flux together in volume and frequency.

Similar to readings of Cardiff’s work, in **strange strolls** the walking and headphone/portable CD player technology introduced a particular type of disjunctive

13 That is, “paradoxical territorialisation” where the outside world is heard less but is seen more; “phonic deterritorialization” where the private and public spaces are joined into one listening space; and a “sonic reterritorialization of the urban space in the sense that sonic urban occurrences are recomposed in terms of musical dynamics” (Thibaud, 2003, p. 334). He derives his notions of deterritorialization from Deleuze and Guattari.

14 Although it is commonly used in everyday language, the word Walkman is a trademark owned by Sony Corporation.

15 In another context: “Most people in modern cities tune out the sounds around them as noise, making the visual experience of the city like the movie without a sound track” (Fontana, 1990/2000).

16 The **strange strolls** pieces required concentration and discrimination to hear the navigational instructions. At times the sound of sudden traffic drowned out important instructions.

experience. It is now commonplace to encounter experiences where one is standing in one place and listening to another place. But the participants in **strange strolls** inhabited a *double place* where the *here* and *there* were *equally present and forceful*. This is unlike, for example, mobile phone conversations where people shout to talk over the “here”. A dislocated and detached self is only one way that the strangeness of **strange strolls** can be read. Feedback from participants indicated that this now accepted understanding of how the portable CD player operates was not the dominant impression. The walks were not exactly like listening to recorded music. The fact that the two places were equally present made it more disjunctive than the now naturalised use of mobile phones or iPods and personal CD players in public spaces.

A.2.5.2 Poly-sensing

In her paper entitled *Soundwalk, Digital Media, and Sound Art*, Sawako Kato concludes “these works are made only with sound, but we use the five sense[s] to participate with them, along with the environment that we experience through the five sense which will feed back into our bodies” (2003, p. 5). “Stories in sound installations can slip and slide against each other... Each voice can be given space, unlike the politics of real life” (Bandt, 2001). We have arrived at a poly- or multi- sensual understanding of the world: our senses don’t act separately, so there are viewscapes, and soundscapes, and smellscapes acting together: the roses we passed and the sea that we smelt contributes to our experience of **strange strolls**. And of course, the outcome of this is to *move on* from conceiving of the combination of the away place and the local place as being merely translation.

A.2.6 To Meander and Back part one

As part of **strange strolls** I developed a walk called ***To Meander and back*** whose away place was *the walkingcountry*. The piece outlines a trip past four photo monitoring points: Blacksoil, Quadrat, Junction and Meander that I photographed each time I visited. Blacksoil was the starting point at the gallery. The other points were located at the correct orientation relative to Blacksoil, out in the streets. The photopoint Quadrat is located at a non-existent cross on the footpath. I aligned a creek in *the walking country* to the sea’s edge in Fremantle. Meander ended up being on a traffic island in the middle of Fleet Street and I made the viewer/participant “circumnavigate the lamppost a few times...” Walking back, the order of stations was reversed but the route taken was a more direct route down High Street to the gallery. In general the sound in the work were largely raw and unaltered. The editing was kept to a minimum.

The awayscape of the Kimberley is a high fidelity soundscape. Overall loud sounds are uncommon. Ambient sounds are hushed. In the Dry Season there is wind drought: standing still you can hear a 30 of 40 metre wide gust travelling across the valley towards you. In contrast, the storms of the build-up and the Wet season have tremendous cracks of thunder. Birds call all year round but there is much more activity of birds and insects

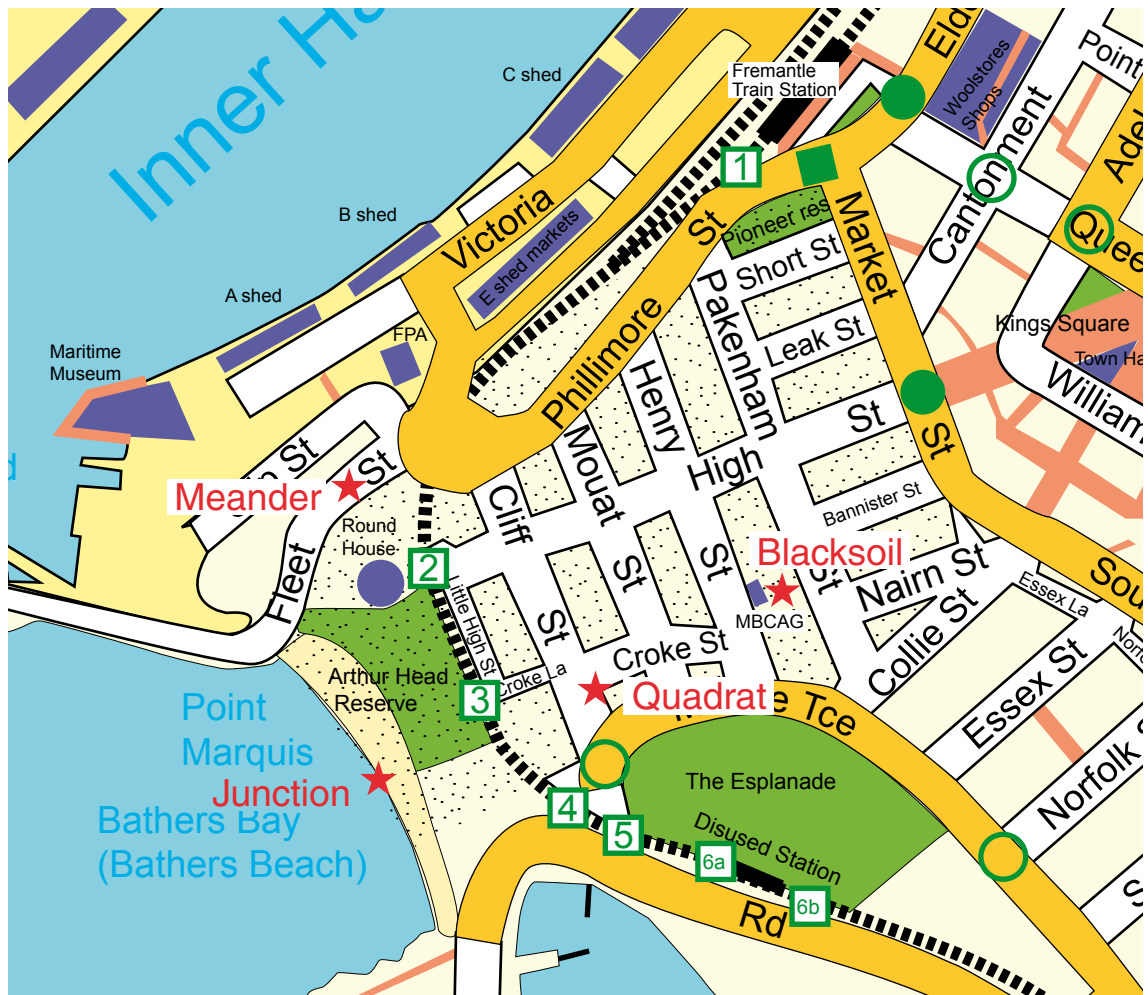


Figure A.2.16 Map of Fremantle showing relative positions of photopoints on the To Meander and back sound walk (Phillips, 2005).

during the Wet. Crocodiles settle territorial disputes with nocturnal yips and bellyflops. In the dry valleys the sound of moving water is restricted to maybe a few tens of days per year.

There were two distinct parts to the work. The walk outward has no talking apart from navigational directions. Most viewers found this disconcerting because there was little to come to grips with. The sounds were “neutral” or ordinary selections from the ten-minute recordings done during each field visit. As you walked through Fremantle the sound transition from each photopoint was seamless. The lack of dialogue was a deliberate strategy because I wanted to slow the listener down and make them concentrate on small things. My intention was as

Figure A.2.17 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006
Detail of Blacksoil Photopoint.





Figure A.2.18 Blacksoil Photopoint looking south in February, 2004, *the walking-country*.

much as possible to make the nonhuman in the awayscape have a conversation with the viewer/participant. In particular I set out create a soundtrack that encouraged attentive listening: slowing down self-chatter and letting the sounds *be*.

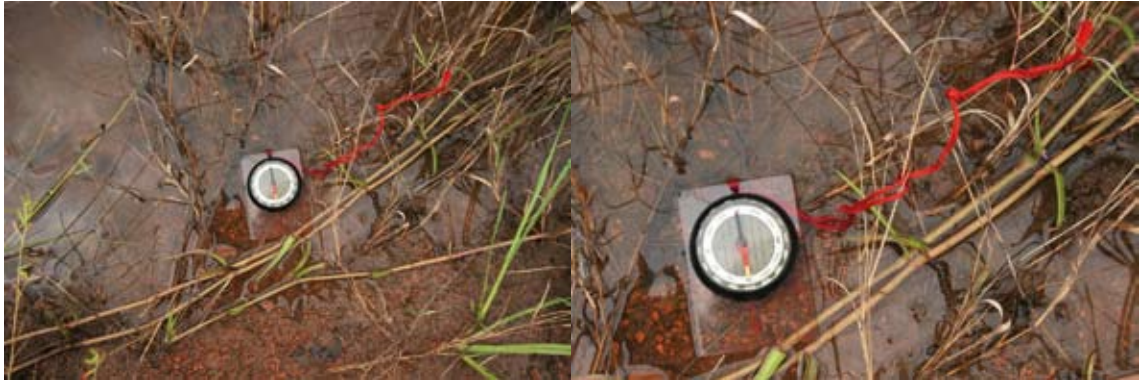
Please listen to track 5, the first sample of ***To Meander and back***.

L.G. writes,

I did your stroll with my mother, ----- . We were worried it would be very hot, but the commentary and instructions were soothing and cooling. We had to listen hard and the soundtrack merged with the real world. We paused at the Kero store (Kidogo Arthouse) and again at the space around the Round House and enjoyed the texture of the ground beneath our feet. The tics and bivalves told us to tell you "hello".

Figure A.2.19 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.





Figures A.2.20 and A.2.21. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Blacksoil Photopoint February 2006.

A.2.7 The nature of the disjunction in strange strolls continued

A.2.7.1 *The anxiety of being lost*

I have said that our senses operate in cooperation but it is also true that we do not sense everything – everyday soundscapes are already highly semantically ambiguous – even in natural areas we *selectively* hear. We discriminate both automatically and consciously¹⁷. Sound artworks take us out of ordinary listening on to more metaphorically rich levels. In the **strange strolls** project it was critical to hear the navigational directions¹⁸ and the degree to which this was clearly articulated, dealt with or ignored by the artists varied. Set adrift by disjunction some people became anxious about getting lost. It was almost as if people resented their time being used up. The degree to which lost anxiousness was present varied. I am reminded of the personality test factor: *surgency*. This is a measure of how positively people rate novel social situations. Age is supposed to affect one's surgency: surgency peaks in young adulthood¹⁹.

¹⁷ *Ubiquity* and *metabolism* are terms developed by Pierre Schaeffer (Hellström, 2002). *Metabolism* is a measure of temporal confusion or instability – the amount of transition in the soundscape – the degree to which there is not a progressive or narrative sense to the soundscape. Cityscapes generally have high rates of metabolism. Again in **strange strolls** the headphones cocooned the participant into a strongly narrative 'scape but the confusion of two places increases metabolism.

Ubiquity is the measure of the spatial confusion of sounds. Binaural recording decreases ubiquity because it is spatially superior, but the complexity of experiencing the Fremantlescape and away-scape increases ubiquity.

¹⁸ I decided at the beginning of strange strolls that I would keep to the cheap and reliable technology of portable CD players but (compared to the audioNomad technology) the linear nature of a CD is a clear limitation. Robert Curgenvén dealt with this by offering a choice of tracks with alternative destinations depending upon the mood of the listener.

¹⁹ Some notes on technology: the works of Canadian composer Hildegard Westerkamp are based on a Schaferian soundscape understanding. She uses the soundwalk as an interrogative technique in the process of investigation, and in a work such as *Kits Beach* she does not require the viewer to walk (they are played in concerts or sold as CDs). *Kits Beach* features a narrator (Hildegard) talking about the sounds of a place and then takes you to the sound studio where she makes clear the artifice of the recording. This is because she is trying to work both outside and inside the soundscape, "both recognizing the boundaries between self and subjectivity exist, and attempting to create the kind of immersive listening that temporarily dissolves those boundaries" (McCartney, 2000). Westerkamp makes apparent the illusion of technological transparency; of the microphone as a transparent window on nature. The microphone does not open a window of transparency onto nature (Madsen, 1995) – it is more like an augmented reality (NB: those that are musically trained are able to break out into reduced listening – an anti—natural process of being able to identify timbre and pitch etc.). In the sense that all recordings are mediated by technology this is probably not a strong source of disjunction in the **strange strolls** walks.

Figures A.2.22 to A.2.24. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. *Strengthening Medicare* stranding February 2006.



A.2.5.2 Continuing transformation afterwards

Akitsu Maebayashi's *Sonic Interface* uses digital software to delay and transform the sound surrounding the viewer/participant. The real-time sounds are played back with a time lapse. The sounds are distorted and looped to produce an altered sound track that can build up to a frenetic conclusion. A guide accompanies each participant on the walk. This is because the eye and ear separation is so extreme, that it leads to feelings of virtualness so strong in the listener, that it prevents coherent movement or speech. This effect can last for some time afterwards (Kato, 2003). In **strange strolls** the more modest goal was to stimulate the viewer/participant to reconsider the ambient, and to develop a permanent sensitivity to sounds of the everyday. Of his reprojected live ambient sound to other places, Bill Fontana writes, "What is so compelling is the natural completeness of the live flows of musical events and patterns. That the live ambient sound constellations present such seemingly perfect relationships makes this art form actualise an awareness of what is already present" (Fontana, 1990/2000).



Figure A.2.25 Quadrat Photopoint looking south in February, 2004, *the walking-country*.

A.2.8 Transformation not translation: the role of viewer/participant has changed

So far I have discussed how ways of sensing and places are multi-dimensional and changing. Instead of exactitude and realism we have change and evolution. Where once we would have been happy with simple models, a more complicated situation leads to ambiguity, disjunction, frisson and wonder. I would now like to draw together some threads about how the object of an artwork, the artist, viewer and environment are linked together.

Taking his lead from the sciences, Simon Waters (2000, listed in EARS glossary) adapted the word *emergence* to describe a soundwork that shows a conscious utilisation of the changing boundaries between the subject (listener, interpreter) and the maker (artist, composer), in which the former interacts with what the latter has made, such that the work can be said to emerge in its “use”, rather than having been designed in its entirety by the artist and then “presented” (Waters, accessed



Figure A.2.26 Image from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006.

Figure A.2.27 Junction
Photopoint looking up
in July, 2005, the walking-
country.

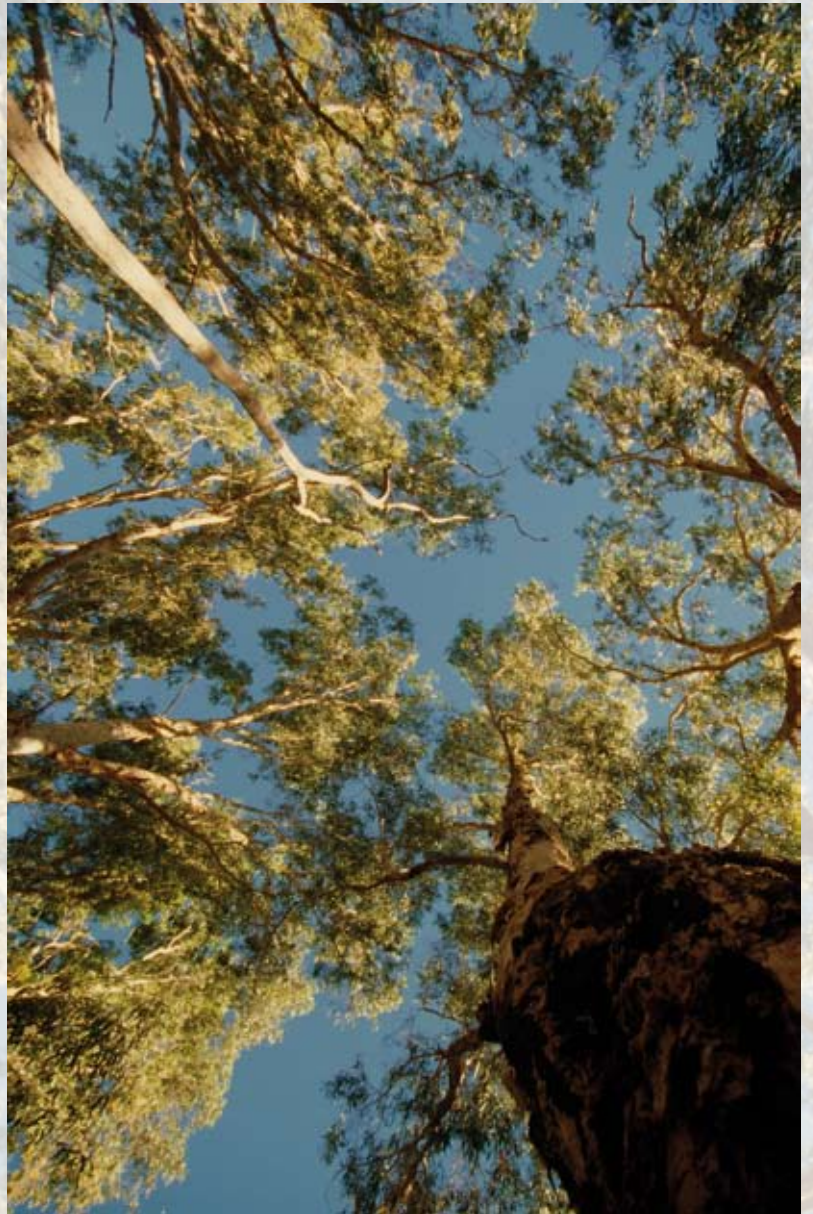


Figure A.2.28 Meander
Photopoint looking south
in February, 2004, the walk-
ingcountry.





Figure A.2.29 Image from *Walking around taking photographs, digital print installation series, 2006*. This is the point where the stream (on the right) is eating through its own meander (the pond on the left).

2006)²⁰. Sound artist Christina Kubisch describes her work in this way: “I organize everything beforehand, and the person who listens to my installation puts it together. It’s like a *puzzle* - I give them the single pieces, and then they can make their own composition with them, by the way they’re moving” (Kubisch, p. 91 cited in Overton, accessed 2006). As discussed in Section 3.3, such a trend for a *relational* practice is now common in contemporary art. The artist makes the systems, interfaces and tools that the spectator uses to finish the artwork. A number of viewer/participants in **strange strolls** remarked upon the fleeting

camaraderie of seeing another headphoner on the streets. In Dorothee von Rechenberg’s work the participants were asked to place a Swiss flag somewhere along their journey through the mountains. Over time the accumulation of other people’s flags made the experience more relationally oriented.



Figure A.2.30 Swiss flag deposited by participants as part of Dorothee von Rechenberg’s walk, *<SNOW>*, 2005.

In Section 3.3 I considered Ric Spencer’s conversational aesthetics that requires that the walking *artist* become conduits for their surroundings. **Strange strolls** puts a further twist on this by putting the *viewer* in this position. In the case of the **strange strolls** walks I believe that the places (away and local) were equally present in the system of exchange between the artist, art object and participant. In the transformational condition, each of these elements pushes against each other²¹. Although brought together their identities do not merge. I persist in retaining the names of each of the places because I did think that they retained their identity by being able to converse with each other. The two places do not dissolve into a homogenised combination.

²⁰ Such a relational model places great demands on the viewer/participant.

²¹ As I stated earlier the artist’s away-place need not have a physical manifestation in reality- it could be completely fictional.

A.2.9 To Meander and back part two

We have seen that in the first section of *To Meander and back* the participants were called upon to create their own conversation with the away place and the local place. In the second section (once the participants have gone around the lamppost a few times) the soundtrack changes to an *in situ* unrehearsed narrative by myself as I walk back to Blacksoil. This recording is binaural. I describe what I am seeing. I talk about how it functions as an ecosystem and how it changes over the seasons. Most people found this easier to interpret and experienced more serendipitous events. For example, during the first two weeks of the exhibition, there were archaeological digs along the route that synched up with me talking about holes that I thought were made by goannas.

Please listen to track 6, the second sample of *To Meander and back*.

S.H. writes

Meandering around Fremantle, whizzing around poles, thankful for wearing thongs (easily taken off) and feeling sand between my toes: all this to the sound of desert and dry wood and insects. This was strangely suitable. Thank you for this meander, and letting me find these places on my own and experiencing them without historically -bent tourist-aimed monologue



Figures A.2.31 and A.2.32. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Probably a water rat's tracks.

A.2.10 Kindness and listening

There is a *reason* why I want people to listen to *the walkingcountry*. I wish to bring its agencies and its histories and politics to the attention of an urban audience. There is a *reason* why there was so much “silence” in the first half of *To Meander and back*. Such silence itself has the potential to counteract the silencing process of colonialism: Jane Belfrage proposes a different (contemporary) process of silence to combat the oppressive colonial silence. This is a process where we *attend* to listening “it is to listen contextually and historically, to listen in relationship, to listen with imagination and heart.” It is *to heed* – to hear the other – and to respond to the injustices wrought (1994)²². Even in the second half of *To Meander and back* (where I am speaking), my desire is to create a place for listening. For Virginia Madsen such tactful listening “unfurls to self-presence,

22 I discuss different processes of silence more fully in Section 3.5 of the Exegesis.



Figure A.2.33 Visual impressions along the route of *To Meander and back*, 2005.

is playful yet respectful, anticipating the chance mutation” (Madsen, 1999, p. 43).

A listening which is aware of its presence, is alert, solicitous, and open to the possibility of interpenetration and mutation. Listening is not only an action born of the desire to know and acquire; one cannot strain too much to hear. Sounds must be allowed to settle and to resound (Madsen, 1995).

“Openness to the Other is characterised not by an ability to form meaningful sounds but by listening” (Carter, 1999, p. 154).

Other artists in the **strange strolls** project would also be aware of the power of silence and of the concept of attentive listening. Viv Corringham, for example, has studied with Pauline Oliveros.



Figure A.2.34 Hands interdigitated (found image).

A.2.11 The artwork’s boundaries

In *To Meander and back* the participants became actors when they were asked to circumnavigate the lamppost. Their performances were visible to others and the field of the artwork rippled outwards from an unexceptional traffic island. Maria Manuela Lopes and Paulo Bernardino’s *Untitled2* not only enfolded the space between the Portugal and Fremantle, but their even-handed use of bilingual navigation instructions persuaded us that departure point and destination were equally important. If the relationship between the two places *were* a simple model of translation then the border between the two places would be exact and continuous. The awayscape in the headphones would be dominant and the interaction with other senses would be without significance. We have seen that this is not the case.

I hope that I have been careful enough *not* to imply that any of the away places really did exist in Fremantle²³. Nevertheless in the newly imbricated environment you can hear as far as *the walkingcountry* (or London, or the Shetlands). What are the consequences for site-specificity? Despite the disjunction that occurs, there is value in bringing two places together. Miwon Kwon²⁴ talks about a relational site specificity where one tries to live in and out of place at the same time. Nicolas Kaye defines site-specific practices as being concerned “with a *working over* of the production, definition and *performance* of ‘place’”. The walker is “always in the process of *acting out*, of performing the contingen-

²³ This would be a full-blown delusion. *Reduplicative paramnesia* is the psychiatric term for such a condition.

²⁴ Kwon outlines six different types of site specificity:

1 1960s artists work “phenomenologically” with space – bringing to attention the physical environment.

2 Institutional site specificity – work is socially and culturally situated like Hans Haacke.

3 Discursive work – the actual site is the issues in the work. Underlying the work how power is played out.

4 Un-sited and working across places because to work in one place is to be complicit with power structures and institutions. Leads to peripatetic artist. Still ends up being complicit with mainstream consumption.

5 Resited – appealing to the nostalgia of past places.

6 Relationally site specific - avoiding un-sited and resited site specificity by trying to live in and out of place at the same time (Kwon, 2002).



Figure A.2.35 Meander: interdigitated traffic island, *To Meander and back*, 2005.

cies of a particular spatial practice²⁵” (Kaye, 2000, pp. 3, 5 original italics). The walker in motion is transformed, and transforms, places.

A.2.12 To conclude

We have seen that hearing and listening are performed in a different way from seeing because sound is immersive and has heightened spatial and temporal characteristics. Equally importantly, listening awakens our awareness of the rest of our senses to make us more skilful at being poly-sensual. Using sound as a medium in art makes available different methods of creating art experiences, such as binaural recording, for re-imagining non-urban places in an embodied way. This was demonstrated in ***To Meander and back***. By using both walking and listening on headphones, sound art walks complicate the experience of a place in art. The soundwalks in **strange strolls** introduced a particular type of disjunctive experience distinct from listening to music on portable CD players or iPods, or from having a conversation on a mobile phone. The Fremantlescape leaked into the awayscape. The two places were equally forceful and equally present. This leakage of sound and the general strangeness of the experience made the local place more wondrous.

²⁵ Of Janet Cardiff’s work, Scott notes, “You are central to the story, because it happens in your head. You unwittingly become a performer who completes a circuit both literally and metaphorically. As a silent voyeur you resist the category of the innocent bystander seen in many films; you are more like a walk-on actor who rarely speaks, but is crucial to the staging of any scene or exhibition. The audio-walks simultaneously spectacularize and subsume your body. You are a technologically enhanced living reference point and Cardiff implicates you emotionally and environmentally” (Scott, 1999, p. 5).

In Section 1.8.8 I defined the artwork as a mutually constitutive dialogue between the artist, the art object, the audience and the environment. This Appendix has shown that the sphere of the artwork is substantially extended in sound art walking projects. By walking, the bodies of each listener “performed” the artwork into existence: the artwork had a life beyond the dimensions of the physical art object. Transformations were experienced by the participants during and subsequent to the walk; and by passers by who chanced upon the participants walking in public spaces. The soundwalks were also transformational because they clearly imbricated the *away place* (of, say *the walking-country*) with *Fremantle*: neither the away place nor the local place were the same as they were before: each of the places (the *here* and the *there*; the *local* and the *away*) were transformed. The away place was changed because it was brought to the politico-cultural attention of the viewer/participant. The streets of Fremantle were perceived with fresh senses and unnoticed things were brought to our attention. Such a standpoint has implications for the aesthetics of places, and more broadly for the relationship between non-urban areas and contemporary urban life in Australia.

In summary the arguments of Appendix A.2 are:

- Hearing *and listening* are performed in a different way from seeing because sound is immersive and has heightened spatial and temporal characteristics. Equally importantly, listening awakens our awareness of the rest of our senses to make us more skilful at being poly-sensual;
- That using sound in art makes available different methods of creating art experiences, such as binaural recording, for re-imagining non-urban places in an embodied way;
- That the soundwalks introduce a particular type of disjunctive experience distinct from listening to music CDs on Walkmans or having a conversation on a mobile phone;
- That the soundwalks were transformational because they clearly imbricated the other place or *awayplace* (of, say *the walkingcountry*) with Fremantle: each of the places (*here* and *there*) was transformed; and
- That the sphere of the artwork is substantially extended in sound art walking projects. This is because of the transformations were experienced by the participants during and subsequent to the walk; and by passers by who chanced upon the participants walking in public spaces.



Figures A.2.36 and A.2.37. Images from *Walking around taking photographs*, digital print installation series, 2006. Blue winged kookaburra and goanna.

A.4 extracts from sound artworks

Disk 1: Extracts of artists from strange strolls walking art project

These works are discussed in Appendix A.2.

Track	Length	Artist	Date	Title	Description
1	50:13"	Viv Corringham	2005	<i>City Switch</i>	Extract of work shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
2	1' 7.56"	Viv Corringham	2005	<i>City Switch</i>	Extract of work shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
3	34.14"	Ric Spencer	2005	<i>Keeping on your right side</i>	Extract of work shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
4	30.01"	Ric Spencer	2005	<i>Keeping on your right side</i>	Extract of work shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
5	2' 3.09"	Perdita Phillips	2005	<i>To Meander and Back</i>	Extract of original 32-minute sound-track shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. Original 32 minute soundtrack
6	1' 59.73"	Perdita Phillips	2005	<i>To Meander and Back</i>	Extract of original 32-minute sound-track shown in the strange strolls exhibition at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery. The work is discussed in Appendix A.2 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 2.39 to 2.41 and A.2.16 to A.2.21, A.2.25 to A.2.29, A.2.33 and A.2.35.

Disk 2: Extracts of sound artworks from the fieldwork/fieldwalking project

Track	Length	Date	Title	Description
1	3' 24.63"	2003	<i>Zoo for the species</i>	Extract from one of 7 10-minute tracks: the beginning of <i>Joy Street Dianella to Midland</i> . Originally part of a 7 track sound installation at the National Review of Live Art , Midland Workshops, Western Australia. The work is discussed in Section 3.3.8 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.3.67 to 3.3.72, 3.3.76 to 3.3.80 and 2.1 to 2.3.
2	4' 00.56"	2003	<i>Zoo for the species</i>	Extract from one of 7 10-minute tracks: end of <i>Joy Street Dianella to Midland</i> . Originally part of a 7 track sound installation at the National Review of Live Art , Midland Workshops, Western Australia. The work is discussed in Section 3.3.8 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.3.67 to 3.3.72, 3.3.76 to 3.3.80 and 2.1 to 2.3.
3	1' 17.51"	2004	<i>Four Tales from Natural History</i>	Extract from one of 4 15-minute tracks: <i>Torresian crows in the walkingcountry</i> . Originally part of a mixed media installation at PICA (2003) and the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery (2006). This work is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 and 2.51.
4	34.67"	2004	<i>Four Tales from Natural History</i>	Extract from one of 4 15-minute tracks: <i>the garden centre</i> . Originally part of a mixed media installation at PICA (2003) and the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery (2006). This work is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 and 2.51.
5	1' 22.45"	2004	<i>Four Tales from Natural History</i>	Extract from one of 4 15-minute tracks: <i>ecology of Purnululu National Park</i> Original 15 minute looped sound track. Originally part of a mixed media installation at PICA (2003) and the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery (2006). This work is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 and 2.51.
6	44.58"	2004	<i>Four Tales from Natural History</i>	Extract from one of 4 15-minute tracks: <i>earthquake</i> (subwoofer version). Originally part of a mixed media installation at PICA (2003) and the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery (2006). This work is discussed in Section 3.2.1 of the Exegesis and illustrated in Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 and 2.51.
7	3' 14.59"	2006	<i>Geological Mapping over 5 days</i>	Extract from original 5 day stereo sound installation: <i>Where are we on the map?</i> The work was displayed in the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery as part of fieldwork/fieldwalking . It is illustrated in Figure 2.59.

Figure A.5.1 below shows the proposed layout for the ***Doing art and doing cultural geography: the fieldwork/fieldwalking project*** published in **Australian Geographer**. Overleaf is the final layout by the publishers. During the publication process low quality jpegs were substituted for the original illustrations which are re-introduced here. Note: the word fieldwalking has also been altered to field walking during the editorial process.



Doing Art and Doing Cultural Geography: the fieldwork/field walking project¹

PERDITA PHILLIPS, *Edith Cowan University, Australia*

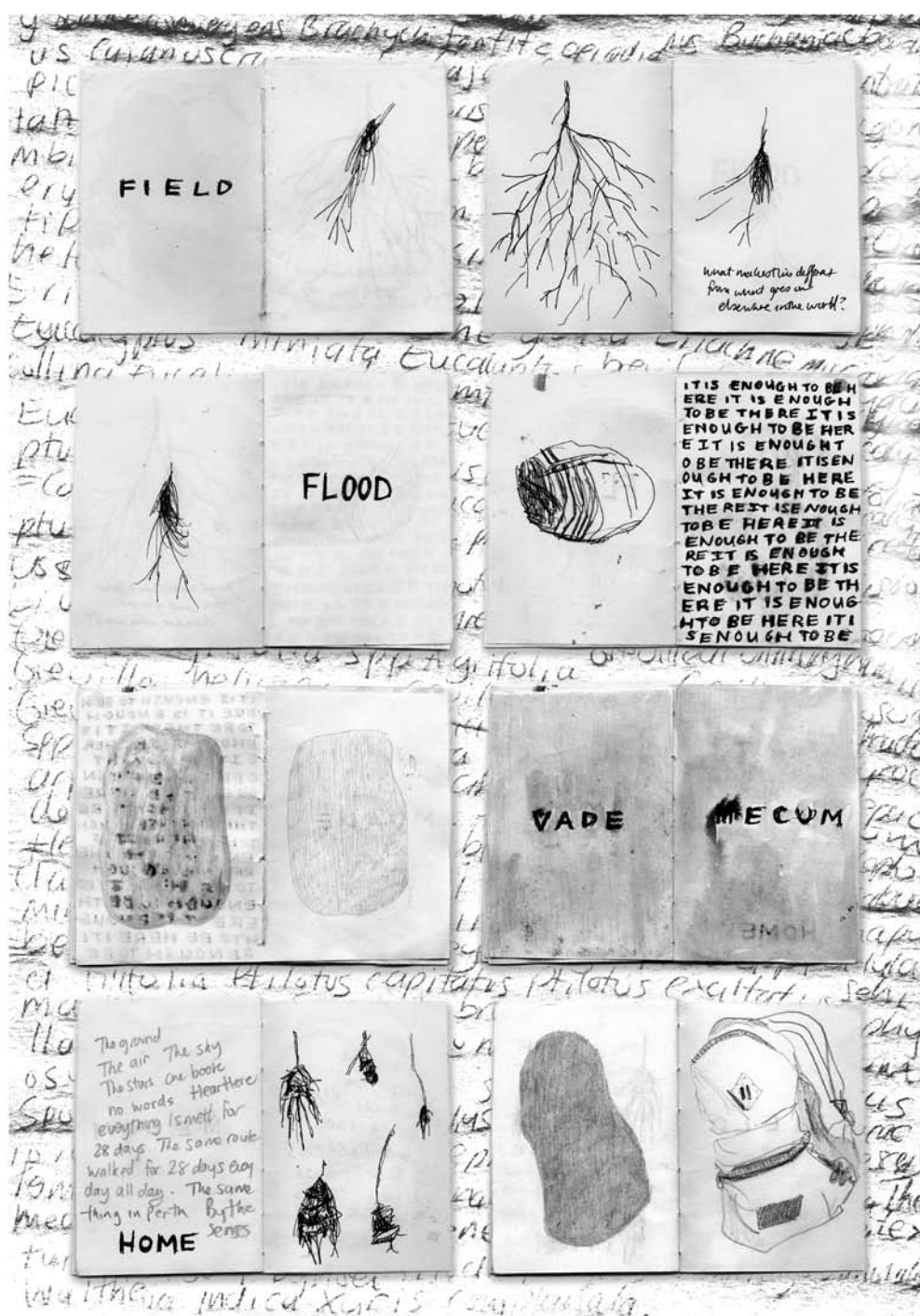
ABSTRACT *With accompanying examples of initial visual experimentation from the fieldwork/field walking PhD project, the paper outlines some of the challenges of being an artist and using systems of understanding from science, the new ethnography, and cultural geography as a framework for making contemporary art. The PhD project is in its preliminary stages and is designed to explore the area of walking and fieldwork in art, and as art. Some of the challenges are the ambiguous role of the artist as scientist, ethnographer and researcher, the role of reflexivity in art practice; and the pitfalls of 'academic art'. While cultural geographers have used artworks as texts to explain places, this project endeavours to work with issues of place, landscapes, power, identity and representation in the art, to feed back into this dialogue. The bulk of the project will take place in the Kimberley region of Western Australia where the concepts of wilderness and wildness are most relevant. The research question posed by the fieldwork/field walking project is: within the discourse between art and science what is the connection between fieldwork and walking in the field?*

KEY WORDS *Walking; fieldwork; Kimberley region; art and science; wilderness; wildness*

Fieldwork/field walking is a PhD project designed to explore the area of walking and fieldwork in art, and as art. The aim is to respond to the question: within the discourse between art and science what is the connection between fieldwork and walking in the field? It is currently in its preliminary stages. The endpoint of the project will be a series of thematically connected visual artworks that will be exhibited in contemporary (urban) gallery spaces. One sub-project will start with observation and documentation of scientists undertaking fieldwork. A larger component of the research process is visiting a field location six times over different seasons. The location chosen is in the Kimberley region. The third sub-project will be developed as a collaborative project with scientists, most likely in the area of remote sensing, with the end product again being seen in an art context.

The art techniques that will be used include video, photography, sound recording and drawing; and the artwork made will be installations using video and sound, digital prints and sculptural objects. The figures included here are all fragments or 'fieldnotes' about natural science and the Kimberley based upon an initial visit to the site. They should be viewed not as reflecting their particular points of insertion but as research running parallel to the text (see Figure 1).

The project is aimed at exploring the boundary between art and science and the



current transformations of meanings of 'nature'. The intention is to create a significant body of work that contributes to new ways of seeing landscapes.

One of the challenges that has become clear in the research process is the ambiguity

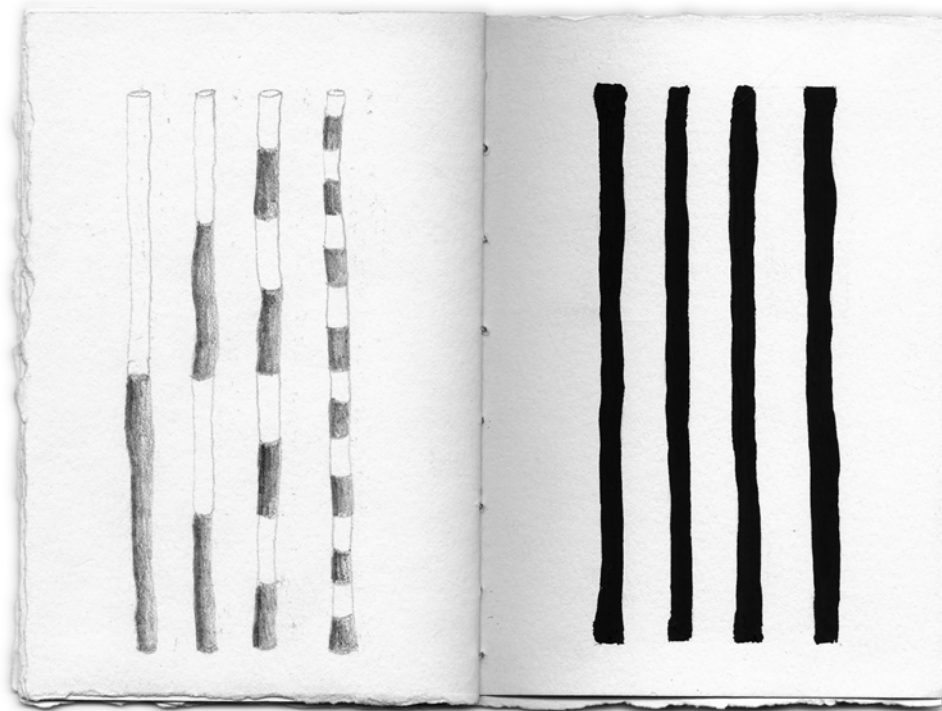


FIGURE 2. Measuring sticks (images from bookworks), 2003.

of roles in the project. In the main part of *fieldwork/field walking*—researching the Kimberley field location—the intention is to understand the environment using the techniques of the natural sciences. In this sub-project the role of the artist is blurred with the role of a natural scientist. In this case my previous scientific training will guide me (see Figure 2).

What happens when the artist becomes a field assistant and takes on the characteristics of a participant observer, and thus, to a greater or lesser degree, acts as an ethnographer? The way that ethnographers have repositioned the subject in the field and re-examined representation of the experience of fieldwork has allowed me to playfully re-imagine the concept of the field and fieldwork (e.g. concepts of reflexivity and narrative; the ‘new ethnography’ of Goodall 2000 or Wolcott 1995).

The way that the field is conceived in this project is also heavily influenced by cultural geography: in *fieldwork/field walking* the field is a space that is coded, regulated and defined as objective by science. It comes into existence as a ‘site’ when the performance of fieldwork takes place: this project positions as one of its subjects not only the field but also fieldwork. While cultural geographers have used artworks as texts to explain places, this project endeavours to work with issues of place, landscapes, power, identity and representation *in the art*, to feed back into this dialogue. It is not claimed that using such a conceptual framework is unique to the arts, because the cultural turn of the late twentieth century has profoundly affected art schools also. It is felt that the artist is treading on dangerous ground *if* this role is interpreted as *being* a cultural geographer: if the artworks are the essential core, then no more than a partial depth of understanding of another discipline can be claimed.

The art critic Hal Foster (1996), whilst praising reflexivity, was critical of the 'artist as ethnographer' model. Over identification with—or idealisation of—the Other puts it into the position of forever being the victim, and simply re-centres the artist-subject. Flexible border zones are needed and not Euclidean spaces; relational modes of difference must be continually brought into existence—not binary structures of otherness.

Foster is critical of the artist as *ethnographic migrant* moving from site to site and issue to issue. He notes that artists need both a horizontal and vertical dimension to their practice: traversing the discursive breadth of a range of issues should not eclipse a historical depth of understanding of the discipline (of art). 'To coordinate both axes of several such discourses is an enormous burden' (Foster 1996, p. 202). Foster (1996) again points to the dangers of the artist working as ethnographer inside institutional structures (such as museums). The artist functions to redeem such spaces by reorganising collections in such a way that invisible Others are brought to the attention of viewers, but without significantly changing the power wielded by the institution. The institution in effect buys self-criticality as the nomadic artist travels the world doing these residencies (Kwon 2000). A type of narcissistic indulgence by the artist (from over self-reflexivity) or the institution (from being obsessively inward looking) can result in a hermetic art if alternative strategies are not enacted.

In the sub-projects that have been proposed, the artist will be directly engaging in half spaces: I am half of 'them'. In the first approach the artist observes people being objective; in the Kimberley fieldwork the artist both pretends to be them (objective) and, when doing 'real' art, be radically not them (subjective) (see Figure 3). There must be some advantage to engaging with the natural environment that (as Other) does not speak verbally to us. The shifting boundaries of the field (as opposed to the laboratory) as a place of cultural translation support and reinforce this approach.

One of the major practical issues of the *fieldwork/field walking* project is how to creatively transform the experience of elsewhere (the field) into artworks. Robert Smithson articulated this problem in his Non-sites in the late 1960s (see Becher et al., 2002; Smithson 1979, 1996). More generally, today's art site is often intertextual: the site has shifted to the discourse. In other words, the primary location of the site-oriented artwork is not the physical site. In the work of Mark Dion, for example, it is the discourse concerning 'cultural representation of nature ... [or the] global environmental crisis' (Kwon 2000, p. 45).

Moreover, fluid identities are a good thing *if* everybody has the same access to, and privileges for, living these multiple identities in multiple places. Indeed, Kwon argues that the persistence of actual places in everyday life may not necessarily represent a theoretically naive point of view. Kwon recommends a kind of 'relational specificity' to overcome the sequence of passive encounters with generic spaces in our lives. Such a specificity recognises the connections and adjacencies of what goes on next to where you are, rather than one thing after another. The *fieldwork/field walking* project sets out to make art that explores this area between the ephemeral or transient experience and the site-specific or in-depth experience.

The field is one of the few areas in science where walking and individual observation are still primary technologies. 'A central premise of fieldwork has been that understanding is founded in personal experience' (Kuklick & Kohler 1996, p. 13). In *fieldwork/field walking* the focus is being shifted to non-urban landscapes. As a contemporary artist there is a danger of being seen as irrelevant if the work is perceived as returning to themes of the bush so common in interpretations of Australia's art history.

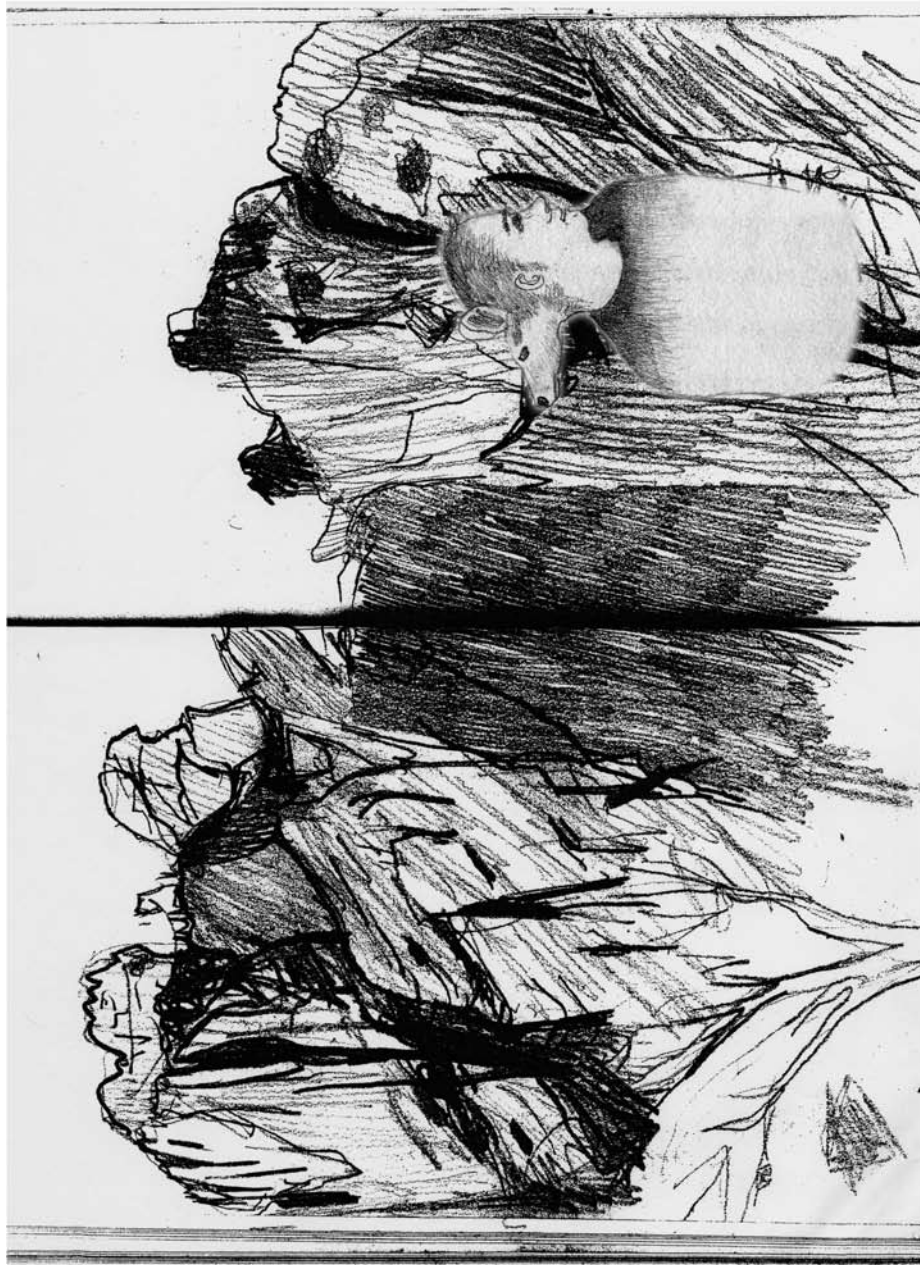


FIGURE 3. Images from sketchbooks, 2003.



FIGURE 4. Flood debris snagged on *Melaleuca argenta*, 2003.

What has been most fruitful has been a shift in my vision from wilderness to wildness. Paradoxically, wildness is the ability to act in a world where nature is contested (when we so often feel powerless) because it is both close to us by being inside us and where our rubbish goes; and also far away from us, because it is the bit of nature which is itself

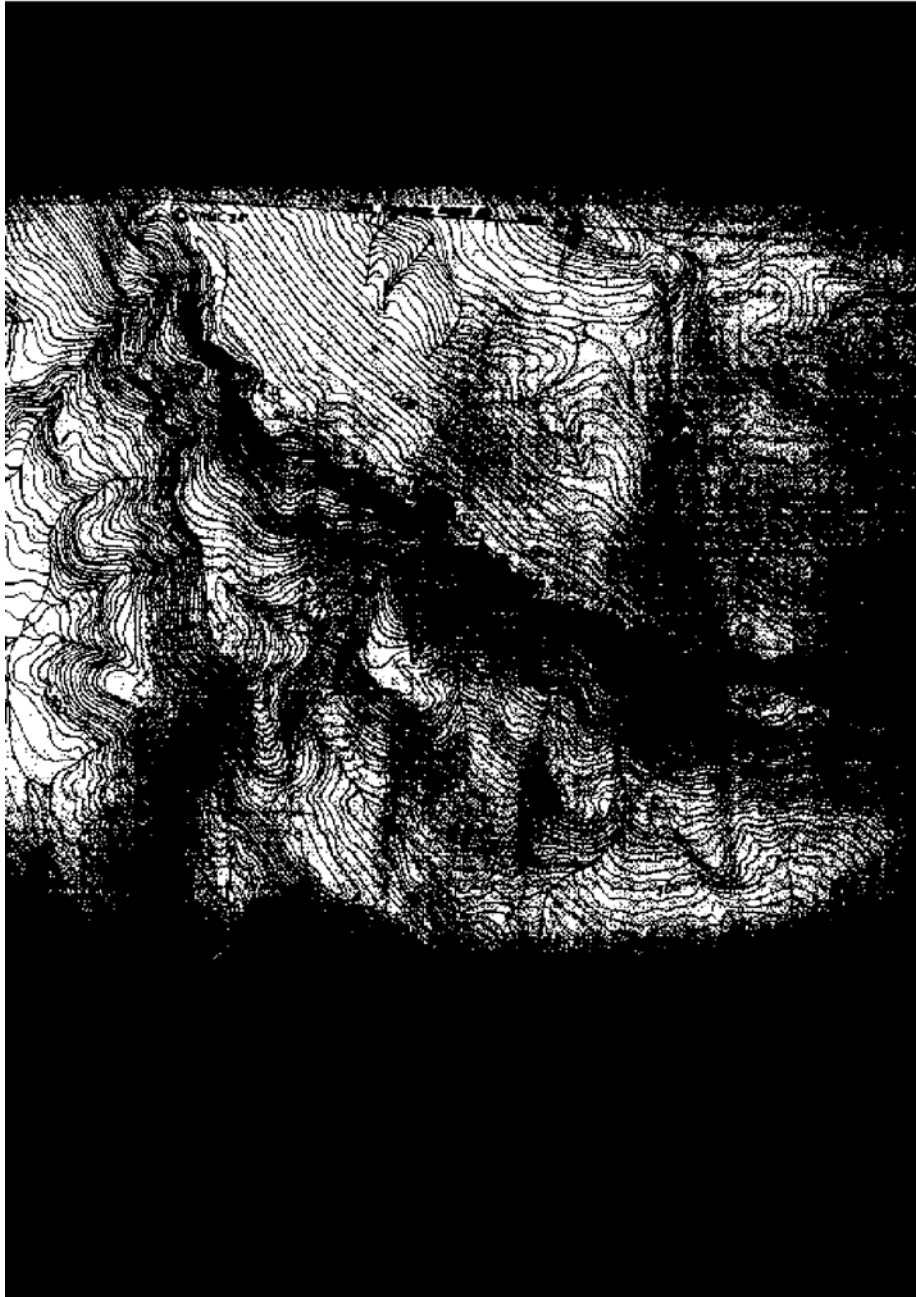


FIGURE 5. Facemap, 2003.

autonomous, and which, first and foremost acts for itself independently. If we want wilderness areas, then as much as anything we should use them to help us identify otherness close by. The concept of wildness is part of the continuing dynamic tension between nature and culture as embodied in the *FutureNatural* of Robertson *et al.* (1996). The latter term includes an acknowledgement of the ways in which nature is constructed, reconstructed and reproduction; of its often troublesome normative aspect; and of a consideration of the impact of new and future technologies on 'nature'.

The non-urban still has the advantage of the otherness of nature being so close that you cannot ignore it.

The striking power of the wild is that wonder in the face of it requires no act of will, but forces itself upon us—as an expression of the nonhuman world experienced through the lens of our cultural history—as proof ours is not the only presence in the universe. (Cronon 1995, p. 88) (see Figure 4)

The challenge will be in bringing it all back home.

Walking is essential to *fieldwork/field walking* because it is a spatial practice and a bodily practice. It engages with more than just the eye. The field site will be re-corporalised by walking. Walking is pivotal to the project because on the one hand it is personal, physical, everyday, and immediate; and on the other it is technologically simple, autonomous and at an increasing distance from the contemporary trajectory of high modernism. These characteristics see it being increasingly left out of the future modern as simulations and cyborgs become the norm. These tensions provide impetus to re-examine walking as an art practice: it connects the field to the urban, the body to spaces, and the wild to the everyday.

A final challenge in the project is not falling into the trap of producing an 'academic art', where theory overtakes the aesthetic experience of the work. The aim as an artist is always to create interesting art from interesting situations (see Figure 5). Perhaps there is an advantage to being able to pick and choose what is useful or inspiring from the physical and the theoretical landscape. The question to ask is, will what this project does help or interest cultural geography? To be able to answer this, lines of dialogue must be opened and discussion must begin.

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NOTE

- [1] A fuller version of this text and further developments can be found at <http://www.perditaphillips.com>

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A.6 A recipe for bad environmental art

1 part simple symbolism
3 parts sticks and stones
dash of ecology
a return to a past state of harmony
half a dolphin
good helping of guilt about environmental problems
1 dreamcatcher
pathetic fallacy/agency

Mix one part simple symbolism with three part materials harmonious to the site. Your use of materials should be ham-fisted. Your art should revolve exclusively around communicating a message to the public.

Select the science of ecology as the criteria for measurement. Overlook the parts of ecology that disagree (eg ecosystems are in constant state of flux)

Represent an environmental problem by *illustrating* it. Don't delve into the underlying causes or wider issues.

Refer back to a pre-existing state of harmony with the environment by prehistoric humans or (patronisingly) indigenous cultures.

Slowly stir in half a dolphin for cuteness.

Add a healthy dash of audience guilt about the environmental problem – but be careful of “artist as martyr.”

Mix in one part pathetic fallacy* and one dreamcatcher for added mysticism.

Protect from art criticism by utilising a position of moral rightness.

And remember ...leave nothing but footprints.

*If no pathetic fallacy, substitute *unproblematically* speaking on behalf of non-human things

(Anonymous Artist (who has made both good and bad environmental art), 2005).

A.7 A summary of Kimberley ecology

The walkingcountry is situated in the Victoria-Bonaparte bioregion which spans the Phanerozoic sediments of the Bonaparte basin across the Western Australian and Northern Territory border, and includes areas of quartz-sandstone ranges (Graham, 2001) such as those around *the walkingcountry*. Just to the east in the Carr Boyd Ranges are areas of the Ord Victoria Plain bioregion with which *the walkingcountry* shares affinities. Taking European invasion as a defining moment, there have been a number of ecological changes in the region as a whole.

The most important factor has been changes in fire patterns¹. Prior to human habitation, fires from thunderstorms were frequent during the late Dry as grasses from the Wet dried out (the wet-dry-lightning cycle). Aboriginal fire management included fire exclusion areas (eg rainforest patches) and burning small patches of landscape throughout the Dry. With the removal of Aboriginal management from most of the landscape, fires have become greater in size and intensity, and more frequent (Myers et al., 2004). There are a number of consequences that are either the direct or indirect result of changing fire patterns. These range from changes in the distribution of plants and animals and changes to overall vegetation structure, to wider issues such as regional climate change. It is believed that changes in fire regimes are at least “partly responsible” for the decline of biodiversity in tropical savanna (Myers et al., 2004, p. iv). Some plants do not survive fires and either favour protected areas or must resprout from seeds (eg *Callitris intratropica* has become much less common). Some species benefit from fire, and other species need longer time periods (three to five years) between burning to produce sufficient seeds (fire interval sensitive plants -- Myers et al., 2004). Many herbivores take advantage of the green pick that grows after fire. Some animals such as possums need tree hollows available in older larger *Eucalypts*, which large hot fires may be affecting (fire intensity sensitive plants -- Myers et al., 2004).

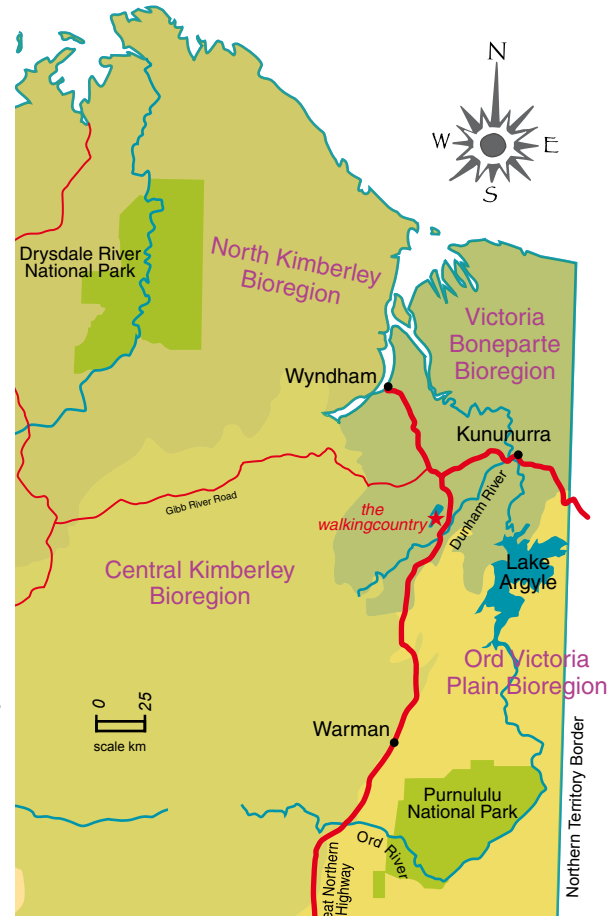


Figure A.7.1 Bioregions of the east Kimberley, from Department of Environment and Heritage (2000).

¹ Fire regime: the size, frequency, season, pattern and intensity of fires.

Landscape heterogeneity is a measure of the patchiness of a landscape in time and space. Fire is an important contributor to landscape heterogeneity. Small fire areas are beneficial. This is because plants can recolonise from the adjacent areas. Many animals can survive in areas that are unburnt and some depend upon a mix of different aged vegetations to supply a suite of needs. This appears to be the case with the Gouldian finch (*Erythrura gouldiae*) that depends critically on a narrow range of grass seeds being available all year round in a limited territorial range. Even when the specific requirements of individual plants and animals are not known, a fine scale mosaic of different fire ages and intensities allows for greatest variety and variability in the landscape. “As a general rule, large areas of monotonous habitat, whether created by extensive frequent wildfires or total fire exclusion [in pastoral areas], are likely to cater for fewer species and lower abundance of many of those that are there, than would be the same areas if the contained a variety of habitats generated by fire” (Myers et al., 2004, p. 18).

Changing fire regimes also affect soil conditions by influencing litter levels, nutrient dynamics, soil micro- and macro-fauna, water infiltration rates, and rates of soil erosion. Another factor affecting soils is pastoralism. In general, hard-hoofed cattle have affected surface soil conditions. Overgrazing has considerably affected some landscapes, especially those near waterpoints and land degradation was recognised as a serious problem in the Ord catchment in the 1960s (Fitzgerald, 1968). The range of the purple-



Figure A.7.2 A fresh fire scar on the eastern slopes of the Saw Range towards the southern head of the Wheelbarrow Creek valley, July 2005.

crowned fairy-wren (*Malurus coronatus coronatus*) that lives in riparian communities has been severely reduced due to vegetation loss/trampling (Rowley, 1993; L. A. Smith & Johnstone, 1977). Another consequence of pastoralism has been the introduction of weed species. The Kimberley is free of some species such as *Mimosa pigra* and prickly acacia (*Acacia nilotica*) but Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*), Bellyache bush (*Jatropha gossypifolia*), *Parkinsonia aculeate* and *Calotropis proceris* are significant weeds. Some have been accidentally introduced in associated coloniser activities, but others are escaped pasture species (eg buffel grass, *Cenchrus ciliaris*).

Historically, many mammal species were once found in much higher numbers. The Western Quoll (*Dasyurus geoffroii*) has disappeared completely from the Kimberley and the distributions of the northern quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*), golden-backed tree-rat (*Mesembriomys macrurus*), Golden Bandicoot (*Isodon auratus auratus*) have decreased severely. This ecologically diverse group of animals belong to a larger group of extinct or declining animals throughout Australia that all fall within the critical weight range (CWR) of 300 g to 5 kg. Possible causes include habitat destruction and fragmentation (below a certain viable size), changed fire regimes, disease, competition and predation by feral animals² or weeds (through displacement of native plants). It is most likely that these decreases and extinctions have been caused by combinations and interactions of these factors in time and space (such as combinations of feral predation, local fire events and habitat homogenisation or fragmentation).

Relatively smaller land areas of the Kimberley are affected directly by mining and intensive agriculture (eg the irrigation farm downstream of *the walkingcountry*, and the larger Ord River Irrigation Area at Kununurra). Both types of activities can affect surface and ground water quality downstream. The hydrology of the Ord River from Lake Argyle down to the sea has changed from ephemeral to permanent, with weed species becoming more prevalent in many areas. The expansion of the Ord Irrigation Project in the next few years will result in loss of habitat through clearing.

In the future, global warming will affect lowlands through rising sea levels and saltwater intrusions into surface aquifers. Rainfall trends in the Kimberley have shown an increase over the last fifty years (Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, 2003). Increased CO₂ will probably make grass grow faster, and combined with greater rainfall, the chances of wildfires will probably increase (A. Reynolds, 2002). Global warming is expected to affect the spatial location (i.e. the “climatic envelopes”³ of species), and whether populations will be able to adapt to these circumstances depends upon the speed of change, how mobile they are and whether there are areas that they can colonise (Department of Natural Resources Environment and the Arts Northern Territory Government, 2005). Questions of how the carbon cycle of tropical savannas relate to wider carbon debates will no doubt become more important in the future.

² Feral animals found in the Kimberley include donkeys, cats, pigs and horses (and cattle outside of pastoral lands).

³ The sum of conditions within which a plant or animal can grow.

A.8 Five examples of the transformation of one place to another in contemporary artworks

A.8.1 Adam Chodzko

In Adam Chodzko's series *Better Scenery* (2001) a sign in one place contains a set of directions that would allow you to find your way to an equivalent sign in a location somewhere else in the world (see Figures A.8.1 to A.8.2). The invitation for the viewer is not only to imagine the *there* but also to wonder at how the *here* might be described.

Figure A.8.1 Adam Chodzko, *Better Scenery*, 2002, Angel Mews Islington, London (Dean & Millar, 2005 p. 67).

Figure A.8.2 Adam Chodzko, *Better Scenery*, 2002, Fargo, North Dakota (Dean & Millar, 2005 p. 67).

A.8.2 Francis Alÿs

Two key ideas of interest in the work of Francis Alÿs are the small “gesture” and the moving artwork. In *The Nightwatch* (2004) Alÿs set a fox free one night in the National Portrait Gallery in London and the viewer sees a series of shots from the security cameras of its travels through the empty halls (see Figures A.8.3 to A.8.11). Magali Arriola explains that in Alÿs’s work the gesture “doesn’t create anything, but takes something over and carries it along. For what is art supposed to do if not carry information from one context to another” (2005, p. 112)¹. The focus of Alÿs’s art is often on “micro narratives or small stories of change ‘so that the story can be repeated (and memorised) as anecdote, as something that can be stolen, or travel orally, and, in the best case scenario enter the land of minor urban myth’” (Arriola, 2005, p. 111).

Figure A.8.3 Francis Alÿs, *The Nightwatch*, 2004, National Portrait Gallery, London 20 videos on 12 individual monitors, each 16 minutes or linear version, video 17 minutes 30 seconds on single monitor (Alÿs, Lampert and Lingwood, 2005, p. 36).

In *Cuando la fe mueve montañas, Lima, Perú, April 11 2002* (*When Faith Moves Mountains, Lima Peru, April 11 2002*) Alÿs responded to the political and social upheaval of Peru in a way that was both epic and futile, absurd and urgent (Alÿs, 2002). The work was a “beau geste” in the midst of an imperfect world -- in the midst of a fractured and unstable social and political climate (see Figure A.8.12). Within the sight of shantytowns on the outskirts of Lima, in the Ventanilla sand dunes, five hundred volunteers were given a shovel and lined up at the base of a 480 metre long sand dune. They then proceeded to

¹ “What characterises gesture,” writes Giorgio Agamben in *Notes on Gesture*, “is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported. It is the process of making a means visible as such” (Arriola, 2005, p. 112).

Figures A.8.4 to A.8.11 Francis Alÿs, *The Nightwatch*, 2004, National Portrait Gallery, London Stills from security cameras (Alÿs, Lampert and Lingwood, 2005, p. 38).

Figure A.8.12 Francis Alÿs, *In Cuando la fe mueve montañas, Lima, Perú, April 11 2002* (*When Faith Moves Mountains, Lima Peru, April 11 2002*) (Doherty, 2004, p. 6).

shovel dirt up over the hill to move the dune ten centimetres forward.

When Faith Moves Mountains attempts to translate (sic) social tensions into narratives that in turn intervene in the imaginal landscape of a place... Here we have attempted to create a kind of Land art for the land-less (Alÿs, 2002, p. 147).

The event happened in a specific place (the *here*) at a specific time, and the artwork spiralled outwards (into the *there*), in the material form of distributed postcards and video documentation of the event (and later articles about it) but also as a rumour at the levels of the local and the artworld. Alÿs seeks to make the art object mobile and to highlight its ability to act as an agent of transmission. "His work never tells any

story in particular but rather crystallizes an image that demands storytelling as an active interpretive process. One day a mountain moved four inches. So begins a tale that we, the audience, must tell” (Anton, 2002, p. 147). Seen as a whole, his practice is an art of passing through.

A.8.3 Pavel Štingl and David Vaughan

In the short documentary film *Druhš Šivot Lidic* [*The Second Life of Lidice*] (Štingl & Vaughan, 2002) Pavel Štingl and David Vaughan traced the story of the village of Lidice (in the Czech Republic) which was razed to the ground on 10 June 1942 by the Nazis in retaliation for the assassination of a Nazi official. 173 men were shot and the women and children were sent to concentration camps where 82 of the children were subsequently murdered². The Nazis rerouted a stream and levelled the ground to erase the village. They used the meticulous footage of the burning and destruction of the village in propaganda films. The women that survived the concentration camps returned after the War to find a field of rye growing where the village once stood.

In 1943 another (Allied) propaganda film called *The Silent Village* had been made in Britain by Humphrey Jennings. This remarkable film was based upon the residents of the Welsh village of Cwmgiedd re-enacting the story of Lidice. Vaughan describes *The Silent Village* as “a passion play in which a village takes onto its own shoulders the fate of another village a thousand miles away” (quoted in Dean & Millar, 2005, p. 128). As time

Figure A.8.13 Humphrey Jennings, *The Silent Village*, 1943, film still of Cwmgiedd (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 128).

has passed those that were filmed in Cwmgiedd have grown old or passed away. In Lidice the village has continued to evolve through communist, Stalinist and post-communist phases, whilst in Cwmgiedd the villagers of 60 years ago are seen again when Vaughan

² 17 surviving children were eventually found.

replays *The Silent Village* to them.

Pavel Štingl and David Vaughan's *The Second Life of Lidice* (2002) features both villages and their inhabitants. It deals with an investigation of the veracity of memory and experience, of both the women that survived and the villagers of Cwmgiedd whose lives had been captured in *The Silent Village*. For example, Vaughan traced down and interviewed the English wife and son of a fighter pilot from Lidice (who live out their lives

Figure A.8.14 Humphrey Jennings, *The Silent Village*, 1943, film still (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 129).

Figure A.8.15 Pavel Štingl and David Vaughan, *Druhý život Lidic* [*The Second Life of Lidice*], 2001, Wynne Horák, Pavla Nešporová and Anna Nešporová by the ruins of the Horák farmhouse, Lidice (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 130).

in England) as well as bringing a grandmother and granddaughter from Lidice to see the village of Cwmgiedd. A Cwmgiedd villager who was in the original film writes of the tension between familial nostalgia of seeing people he grew up with and the horror of another village, an emotional piercing that will not go away. Through the circumstances of history, the two places, Lidice and Cwmgiedd, have been folded back upon each other.

A.8.4 Roni Horn

Roni Horn's work is influenced by ideas of place. Pairing and doubling are recurrent visual manoeuvres in her work. By placing identical objects in different spaces in the work *Piece for Two Rooms* (1986-1991), Horn raises directly the issue of initial and subsequent experiences of an artwork (see Figures A.8.16 and A.8.17). When the viewer stands in *here*, after already being to *there*, the event is fundamentally altered. For Horn the experience of the artist and the viewer are equally important and for each it is seen as an embodied process.

I try to make sensible experience more present... I try to reach the viewer by addressing the bodily and not just the mental/non-physical being. The viewer must take responsibility for being there, otherwise there is nothing there (Horn, 1997).

Her work is concerned equally with the bodily possibility of "placing one part of the world in another... [and] to bring distant things close" (Neri, 2000, p. 66) and the artwork's metaphorical possibilities. Indeed it is the phenomenal and spatial nature of her work that allows her to amplify the experience of the viewer.

Horn uses travelling to a place as an epistemological strategy. There is a restlessness in her relationship to place which has allowed her to keep returning to place as a source of art making³. One important aspect of her work is her thirty-year relationship with Iceland. The water, weather, people and geology of Iceland have been the subject matter of photographs (see Figures A.8.18 to A.8.28). The photographs are often broody and spectacular, but a careful clarification needs to be made between what is represented and what is under consideration. Iceland is not a static or unpeopled wilderness.

³ From Horn's Icelandic field notes in *Pooling Water*:

I don't want to read. I don't want to write. I don't want to do anything but be here. Doing something will take me away from being here. I want to *make being here enough*. Maybe it's already enough. I won't have to invent enough. I'll be here and I won't have to do anything and this place will be here, but I won't do anything to it. I'll just let it be here. And maybe because I am here and because the me in what's here makes what's here different, maybe that will be enough, maybe that will be what I am after. But I'm not sure. I'm not sure that I'll be able to perceive the difference. How will I perceive it? I need to find a way to make myself absolutely not here but still able to be here to know the difference. I need to experience the difference between being here and not changing here, and being here and changing here.

I set up camp early for the night. It's a beautiful, unlikely evening after a long, rainy day. I put my tent down in an El Greco landscape: the velvet greens, the mottled purples, the rocky stubble. But El Greco changes here, he makes being here not enough. I am here and I can't be here without El Greco. I just can't leave here enough" (reproduced in Neri, 2000, p. 58, my emphasis).

Figure A.8.16 Roni Horn, *Piece for two rooms* from *Things that Happen Again*, (Room 1), 1997 (Horn, 2000, p. 19).

Figure A.8.17 Roni Horn, *Piece for two rooms* from *Things that Happen Again*, (Room 2), 1997 (Horn, 2000, p. 21).

Figures A.8.18 to A.8.23. Roni Horn, *To Place -- Book II: Folds*, 1991 (Horn, 2000, pp. 110-111).

Horn writes,

I expect it (the landscape) to change. Of course I am extremely sceptical and critical of humanity and it's relationship to the nonhuman world, but I know in going to Iceland I'm not going there to get away from that. Iceland is really the centre of action for me... When I go to Iceland that's where I get nervous, where I think: "Oh my God, this is intense." ...Iceland is something that is not familiar to me, even after all this time, partly because of what's happening there, but also because it is forever foreign to me. It's much easier to see things when you come from the outside (Horn, 1997).

Iceland is the place that gives Horn the clearest view of herself. The island is not just a landscape or even just a state of mind but the notion of exploration itself. "The basis of her interest in landscape is not objectively empirical, but rather grounded in the recognition that she observes the world not through a window (or... the camera's lens)

Figure A.8.24 Roni Horn, *You in You*, 1997-2000 (Horn, 2000b, p. 139). Photograph, marker pen. Working drawing for walkway of alternating hard and soft rubber tiles case from Kirkjugóf geological formation (83 metres, depth 5 cm) Permanent installation, Basel, Bahnhof Ost.

but by inhabiting it” (Neri, 2000, p. 60). Place is a condensation of acts.

Horn’s interest is in mapping the connections between things through all the senses⁴. These sensings and connections generate the metaphorical level of her work. For example, she was commissioned to make an artwork for the Bahnhof Ost (eastern train station) in Basel. She took a cast of basalt pavement in Iceland and turned it into a 200 metre long rubber walkway. The work (titled *You in You* (1997-2000)) was indistinguishable in colour but varied subtly in softness along the length of the path. Horn used the substance of her experiences in Iceland to create a sensual experience in Basel. Moreover “it introduces not simply an organic form – landscape – into an urban context, a public space, but also a psychological presence, a kind of mirror for the unseen. It introduces the idea of another place in order to form a complex with it and reform the place you’re standing in” (Horn in L. Cooke, 2000, p. 24).

In many of her gallery works the nature of the dialogue between the photographs (of places) and the gallery is constructed so that the space of the gallery becomes a landscape. Of *Pi* (see Figure A.8.26) Horn notes, “It’s half you and half what’s out there, because it keeps you in the space in such a way that the room becomes a landscape... It becomes a place” (Roni Horn in L. Cooke, 2000, p. 18). The corollary of this is that the *there* place is freed of some of its clichéd interpretations because the viewer’s attentiveness to the *here* (gallery) place

⁴ The logic of her relational history tends to develop out of a sensible, as opposed to visual realm, radiating everywhere in the geography of experience and impugning all manner of fixed or essentialising identification (Neri, 2000, p. 30).

Figure A.8.25 Roni Horn, *Yous in You*, 1997-2000 (Horn, 2000b, p. 140). Collage, ink (working drawing).

Figure A.8.26 Roni Horn, *Pi*, 1998 (Horn, 2000b, p. 8). Photo installation. 45 Iris printed colour and black and white photographs installed on 4 walls. The photographs are of landscapes, of eider duck nests, people (down collectors), empty house interiors, TV soap opera characters from screen shots and stuffed animals. Various dimensions 51.5 x 69 cm; 51.5 x 51.5 cm; 51.5 x 46 cm.

Figure A.8.27 Roni Horn, *To Place -- Book V: Verne's Journey* 1995 (Horn, 2000b, pp. 61).

Accompanying Horn's sculptural works is a series of limited edition books known as *To Place*⁵. Their form varies but they usually contain photographs of places, and especially of Icelandic geology, water, weather and life (see Figures A.8.18 to A.8.23 and A.8.27 and A.8.28). Taken as a whole they can be considered a journal of spatial experiences. Again, whilst they are site dependent, they are part of a discussion of wider issues:

⁵ *TO PLACE*, ongoing limited-edition book series:

Book 1: *Bluff Life*. New York: Peter Blum Edition, 1990. 14 colour images; edition of 1150; special edition of 150; 36 pp.

Book 2: *Folds*. New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1991. 36 colour images; letterpress; edition of 700; 72 pp.

Book 3: *Lava*. New York: Roni Horn, 1992. 16 colour and 29 tritone images; letterpress; edition of 750; special edition of 100; 92 pp.

Book 4: *Pooling Water*. Cologne: Walther König, 1994. 2 volumes; English and Icelandic text; edition of 1000; special edition of 6. Vol. 1: 27 colour and 25 duotone images; 96 pp. Vol. 2: 4 colour images; 176 pp.

Book 5: *Verne's Journey*. Cologne: Walther König, 1995. 19 colour and 8 duotone images; edition of 1000; 56 pp.

Book 6: *Haraldsdóttir*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 1996. 30 colour and 31 duotone images; edition of 1000; special edition of 100; 96 pp.

Book 7: *Arctic Circles*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 1998. 67 colour and 7 duotone images; edition of 1650; 140 pp.

Book 8: *Becoming a Landscape*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 2001. 2 volumes, each 22 colour images and 44 pp.; edition of 900; special edition of 100 ("Roni Horn: Part I and Part II: Selected artists books", 2001).

I've been working on this since 1988... The books are this very slow process of accumulation in the period of a life, my life... The underlying subject stays the same: Iceland and myself, the viewer and the view (Horn, 1997).

Again, the first interpretation of the title of this series might be going to a place (noun), but the books are just as much about the verb: to place oneself somewhere.

The verb, to place, as an activity in itself is a condition of being present. In the context of *To Place*, the verb operates dialectically (sic). The view is not separate from the viewer: Iceland viewed is something other than Iceland. Similarly, the identity of the viewer is not separate from the place viewed...

In *To Place*, the viewer is me and the view is Iceland. This reciprocity is key to the work. Each volume is a dialogue spun directly out of this interchange (Horn, 2000a, p. 104).

Louise Neri maintains that Horn's ultimate meaning of "to place" is the perceptual process of self-realization (Neri, 2000).

The work of Roni Horn has considerable material presence. She has the peculiar ability of being able to balance the here and the there. In the former case she is concerned with the viewer's poly-sensual experience; in the latter case her relation-

Figure A.8.28 Roni Horn, *To Place -- Book IV: Pooling Waters*, 1991, (Horn, 2000b, p. 59).

ship with the place is the starting point for her investigations. Her photographs show a considerable sensitivity to her own experience of place (and, particularly, to the landscape's changeability). It is by the strength of the connection *between* the here and the there, that her work is both personal and generous to others, retaining specificity to place at the same time as it is collectively available. Regardless of the form of the final artworks, neither the *here*, the *there*, nor the space in between, are neglected.

Figure A.8.29 Paula Levine, *San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2003) showing the initial state in the animated sequence of a web-based locative media project at <http://paulalevine.banff.org/> (Levine, 2003).

A.8.5 Paula Levine

A different approach is taken by Paula Levine in her work *San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2003) a web-based locative media project at <http://paulalevine.banff.org/> (Levine, 2004). In this work, launched one year after the United States invasion of Iraq, Levine brought together maps of San Francisco and Baghdad at the same scale to produce what she calls an “interlocational map” (Levine, c. 2004)⁶. At the website military targets from Baghdad were displayed to an accompanying soundtrack of the invasion. On the ground in San Francisco, geocaches⁷ containing information about the project, the U.S. Roll Call of Death and a commentary book, were located at each of the target sites. Levine’s aim with this project and more recent artworks is to create hybrid spaces

⁶ The word, *interlocation*, describes the position or space represented in these overlays. The word is composed of *inter*, suggesting *between* or *among*, and *locus*, meaning *place*. *Interlocation* brings to mind something taking **place** between locations which describes these mappings quite accurately. The maps reflect not only an overlaying of **one** site upon **another**, but they also visualize the space that exists as the result of that overlay, conceptually moving between **one** site and the other. Inter location is the space that arises through this **transposition** of **one place** upon **another**. It allows relationships between distant spaces to be simultaneously realized and offers an extended sense of relatedness (Levine, c. 2004, p. 19, emphasis in original).

⁷ The game of hunting for hidden treasures all over the world using GPS devices. See <http://www.geocaching.com/>.

via transpositional mapping: the *here* is overlaid with templates of events from the *there* as a method of making sense of geographical estrangement by bringing understandings of other places back to the local⁸.

Figures A.8.30 to A.8.31. Paula Levine, *San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2003) showing the changes in the animated sequence of a web-based locative media project at <http://paulalevine.banff.org/> (Levine, 2003).

⁸ In 2002 when the *fieldwork/fieldwalking* project was formulated one of the original aims was to build a GIS using creative and Cartesian data about a place. At the time the software was extremely expensive. A collaborative partner (from within the University or from a commercial company) could not be found. Levine's project is typical of the flourishing of locative media projects that has resulted in the more widespread availability of open source DIY GIS software and open-source web-based applications since that time.

Figure A.8.32 Paula Levine, *San Francisco <-> Baghdad* (2003) showing the final state in the animated sequence of a web-based locative media project at <http://paulalevine.banff.org/> (Levine, 2003).



Figures A.8.33 to A.8.35 Images from
Walking around taking photographs,
digital print installation series, 2006.
The man who mistook his wife for a hat
 (Oliver Sacks, 1986), *Labyrinths* (Borges,
 1970) and *Labcoat stranding* retrieved in
 February 2006.

Famous last words of a field biologist: They never attack humans.